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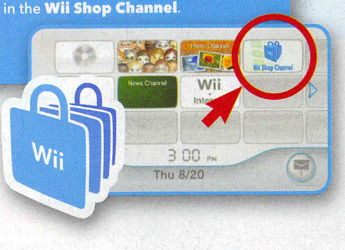
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The series that's taken Japan by storm lands on Wii this spring! Grab some friends, go online, and slay some giant beasties in Monster Hunter Tri.

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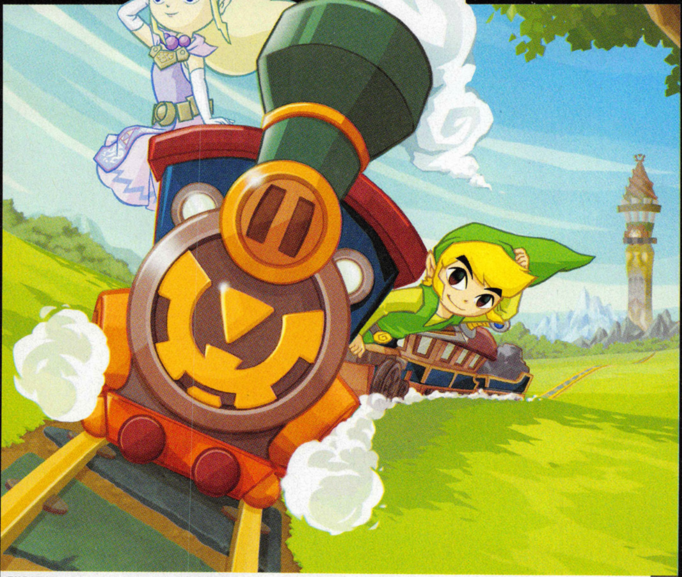
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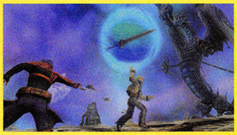

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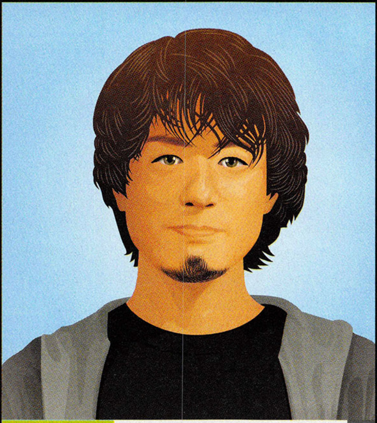

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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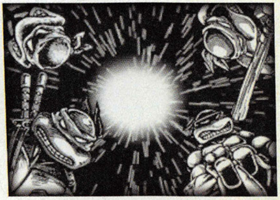

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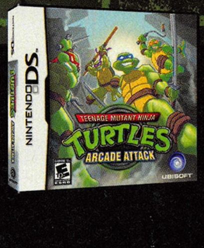

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Turning the Tables

Chris Slate

The classic image associated with playing a video game is of someone sitting in front of a TV, but the time may have come for that to change. In just five years the Nintendo DS has redefined gaming and is used by more people than any other system, meaning that handhelds no longer play second fiddle to consoles. We'll always play games on our TVs, of course, but in a world where it's often hard to find the time to park on the couch, and where our lives are increasingly linked to the electronics in our pockets, portable systems are ready to buck their second-tier status for good. That thought might have been alarming in the days when handheld games were simplistic, underpowered, and had poor graphics, but the DS is capable of the kind of full-featured epics (see this month's cover story) that used to be the exclusive domain of home systems. Fun is fun, and if I can take the fun with me on the road, all the better.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

ULTIMATE ZELDA We pick the best Zelda game EVER PLUS the best weapons, dungeons, boss, & more!

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Future

V248 DECEMBER 2009

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while kicking Cuckoos. But first, this month's special letter request: what is the coolest vehicle you've ever driven or ridden in a video game? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

A FOND FAREWELL

One of my beloved childhood idols has passed away. "Captain" Lou Albano, better known to most of us Nintendo fans as the actor who portrayed Mario in the live action segments of *The Super Mario Bros. Super Show!*, died on October 14 at the age of 76.

As someone who grew up watching that show, this is truly a devastating loss. Whether he was desperately trying to clean up the house before Aunt Luigina arrived, or thinking he was a chicken after getting hit on the head, Capt. Lou's Mario captured my heart by giving the plucky plumber a voice and personality long before Charles Martinet could do the same on a console. I feel as though a part of my childhood has died with him.

Farewell, Capt. Lou. You will be sorely missed. Let's all "do the Mario" one last time for him. **—GEOFF C.**

WORD WIZARD

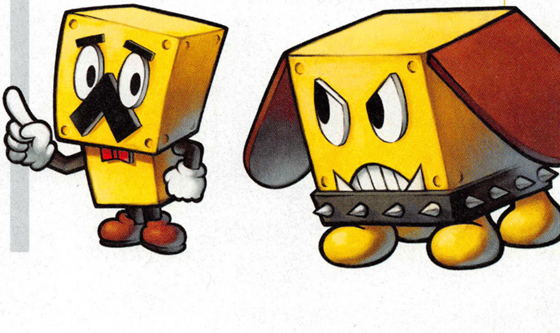
I really like it when alliteration is used in games. Some good examples of this are Super Mario Galaxy's Bubble Breeze, Beach Bowl, Sea Slide, Deep Dark, and Sand Spiral stages. Here's hoping that Super Mario Galaxy 2 continues the tradition. **—KENNY M.**

We'll, er, cross our fingers.

BRING BACK BROQUE!

I found Broque Monsieur in Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story to be a very memorable character. Did he stand out for you guys, too? And do you think we'll see him make an appearance in another game? (You know, like how Waluigi decided to stick around after his N64 tennis matches?) **—CHRIS (GRAWLY)**

You never can tell, Chris (nice name, by the way), but I certainly hope so. Broque may just be my favorite new character of 2009!



Newcomer Broque (and his, uh...dog?) made a big impression in Bowser's Inside Story.

I can't believe that Four Swords Adventures was 12th place in your Zelda rankings. It's my all-time favorite game in the series, and I think that, even if it does lose something when played in single-player, it also becomes easier because you don't have to synchronize with others, or race them for the best items. **—PATRICK**

ULTIMATE ZELDA

We name our favorite boss, dungeon, weapon, and more, and pick the best Zelda game of all time!

13. Zelda II: The Adventure of Link

12. The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures

11. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask

TRIFORCE TALK

I was pleased with your list of top Zelda games, but how could you rank Majora's Mask so low?! For years I've tried to convince people that the game is one of the most amazing Zelda experiences, and it turns out that not even Nintendo Power has my back! **—KAFEI**

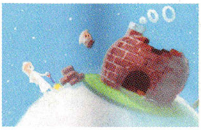
I've gotta say that I agree with you guys about how great The Wind Waker looks—its graphics are way better than Twilight Princess's, in my opinion. But unfortunately, I doubt that we'll ever get another cel-shaded console title because too many geeks complained that the game looked kiddish. I think it's a great look for Zelda! **—REBECCA**

Most Zelda fans are too closed-minded about new games in the series. No matter which game is their favorite, it's almost always for a sentimental reason—which is fine, but they're essentially setting themselves up for disappointment.

If the next Zelda for Wii were to be the best game ever, it still wouldn't change the fact that you might have played A Link to the Past first, or that Ocarina of Time was the series's first 3-D game. Twilight Princess had a deep storyline, refined gameplay, and the series's best graphics. Deep down, though, I think that many gamers decided it wasn't going to be their favorite Zelda before they even played it. And if you're not going to let Nintendo make a better game, where can the series go but downhill? **—LORD SOTHE**

I know this is a crime punishable by death in some states, but I've never played a Zelda game. Which one would you recommend that a newbie like me play first? **—CHOCOMINT**

I think that A Link to the Past (available on Virtual Console) is probably the easiest to get into, and it's also one of the best Zelda games ever.



TEARS OF JOY

I just beat Super Mario Galaxy and read the additional storybook chapters. I was really touched by the story, and even teared up a little when the girl missed her home and family. I'd like to thank Nintendo for not just putting fun action into its games, but emotion, as well. **—THE LITTLE LUMA**

FALSE ALARM

I don't like the look of the Super Guide feature in New Super Mario Bros. Wii because it lets people cheat. If it will even beat boss levels for you, then gamers could basically do nothing and still clear the game. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I understand your concerns, but there's no need to worry; see my review on page 79 and rest easy!

Super Guide
00000000
498
Exit

Seriously, folks: the Super Guide in New Super Mario Bros. Wii in no way hurts the game. Stop worrying!

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hey Hoff, I keep noticing your name on WWE-related articles, and it got me thinking—are you really who you say you are? I think not, and I have three theories about your true identity: 1. Rey Mysterio, 2. The Hurricane, or 3. Goldust. **—ANDY**

The Hoff says: Rey Mysterio? *Rey Mysterio?!* You would have to bring up my masked rival, wouldn't you? I'll have you know, when that so-called king of mysteries beat me in Wii Sports Boxing three years ago (true story), I was at a distinct disadvantage. I wasn't even wearing my glasses! And I had the flu! And I'm certain someone hit me from behind with a steel chair! Probably Chris Shepperd! I was robbed, I tell you—robbed!! Since you brought that up, I'll never tell you how I've been secretly altering my DNA to become the third Hardy brother.

I would add the classic Legend of Zelda overworld theme to Ocarina of Time's amazing soundtrack. I, like most people, view Ocarina as a near-perfect game, but one of my few problems with the title is its lack of that song. I think that it would give Ocarina the perfect soundtrack and make the game even better than it already is. **—KYLE M.**

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT ONE GAME?

I would include a split-screen co-op mode in Super Mario Galaxy where one player is Mario and the other is Luigi. This way, work could be done faster (especially during the Purple Comet challenges where you need to collect 100 coins). Super Mario Galaxy 2 could have it as well, and there could be two Yoshis (unless one Yoshi wants to carry both incredible Italians). **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

While I enjoyed the opportunity to upgrade gear and control gravity in Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity, I wish the game would have allowed you to attack your opponents like the first game. That was so much fun and I missed it! **—ASHLEY**

I would remove Spiny Shells, Lightning, Bullet Bills, and Thunder Clouds from the Mario Kart franchise. I love Mario Kart Wii, but I don't like the fact that, when you're in first place, you are constantly hit by these cheap items. **—KYLE M.**

I would change Mario Kart DS or Mario Kart Wii so that you could make your own kart. I think it would be cool to use the Nintendo DSi Camera and an SD card to take a picture of yourself and make any character drive a kart that's shaped like you or whatever you want. **—RABIA S.**

Fishing could have been perfect for Wii Sports Resort—it would've tied into the feel of the game perfectly and should've at least been included as some sort of bonus game. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I would make it so that you could play Wii Sports Resort with friends using Wi-Fi. There could be a Mii Sports Hall of Fame where the Mii characters with the top high scores could be posted for the whole world to see, and you could send challenges to your friends via the Wii Message Board. It would be an awesome addition to the game! **—MIGHTY ETHAN**

In The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time Master Quest for GameCube, I wish you could assign the Iron Boots to a button. It's very frustrating having to press Start to equip the boots from the menu every time you need them, especially in the Water Temple. **—JASON M.**

In Animal Crossing, I would make Tom Nook's shop stay open 24 hours a day. **—ERIC CHANG**

I would change The Conduit so you could communicate with everyone on your team instead of just friends; it's annoying having to shoot someone to get their attention. **—NINTENJOE**

I'd change the New Super Mario Bros. Wii character lineup. Instead of a second Toad, why not include Princess Peach and give the characters their own unique abilities? **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Actually, we've got the answer to that question on page 81!

I love Super Mario Sunshine, but it needs a multiplayer mode. Cross this game with Call of Duty, and you have the perfect online third-person shooter/platformer on the market. How much fun would it be to duke it out against your friends while trying to collect red coins? I personally think it would be great, not to mention it would be fun to just run around in a giant squirt-gun fight. **—HAMSTER DUNCE**

OK, I'll play: I'd fulfill a childhood dream and make it so that, in Duck Hunt for the NES, you could zap that annoying dog.

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Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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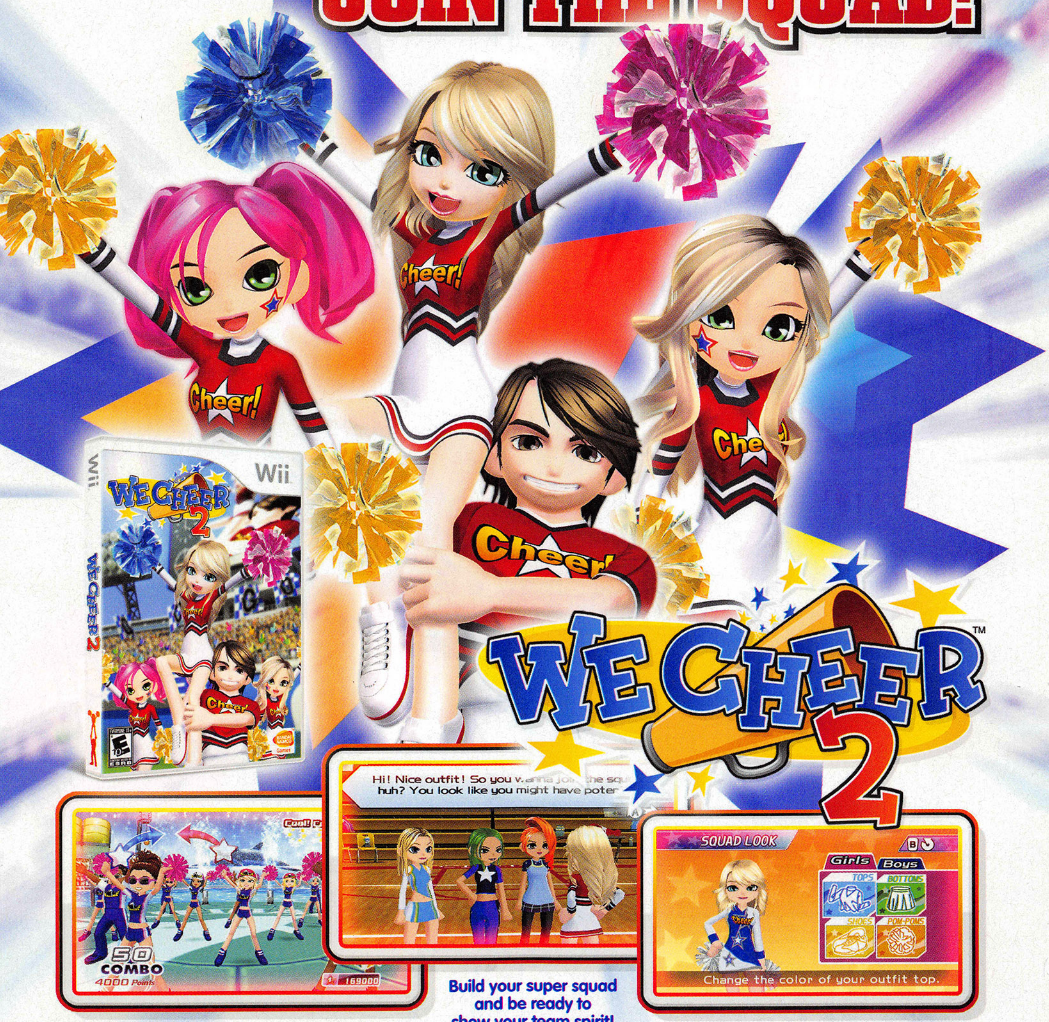
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WHAT MATTERED THE MOST WAS REMEMBERED THE LEAST

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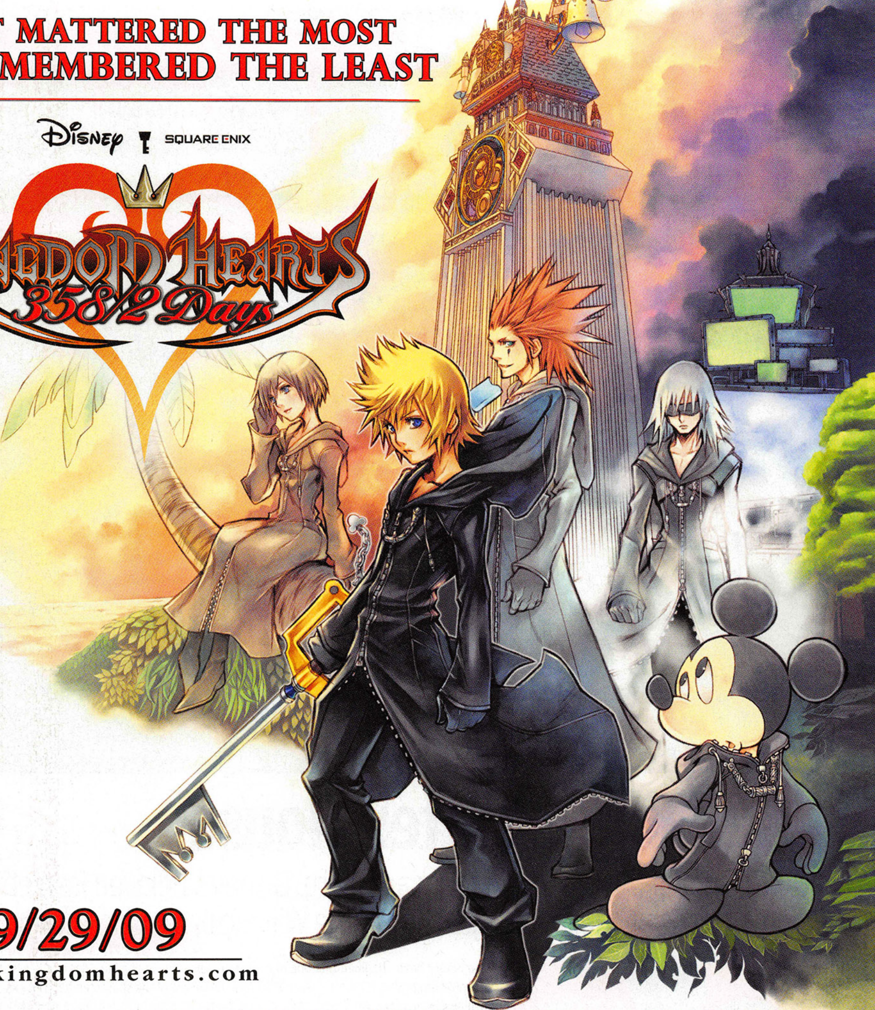

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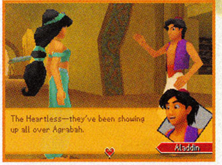

The Heartless—they've been showing up all over Agrabah.

Appearances from familiar Disney characters, such as King Mickey, Aladdin, Tinker Bell, and more!

EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB Fantasy Violence

NINTENDO DS™ Disney SQUARE ENIX

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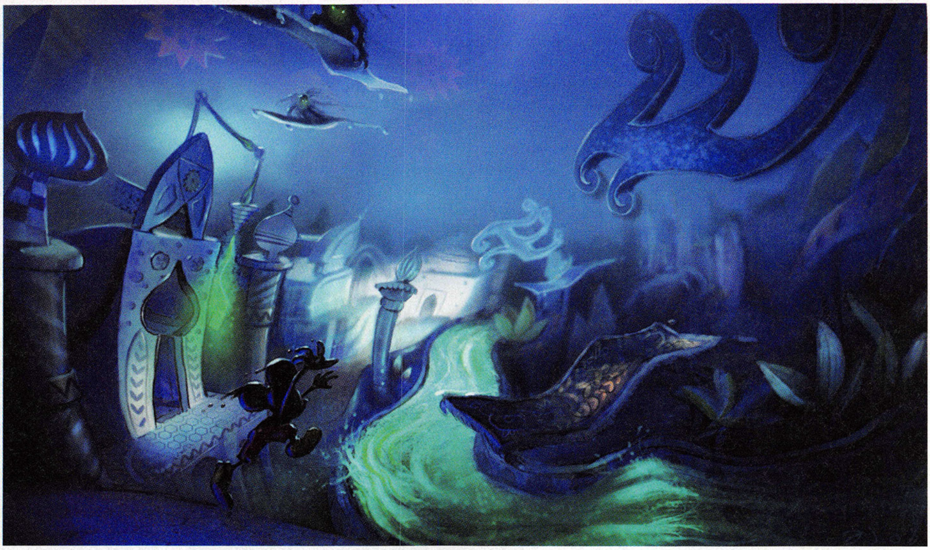
NORTH AMERICA GETS STRANGE

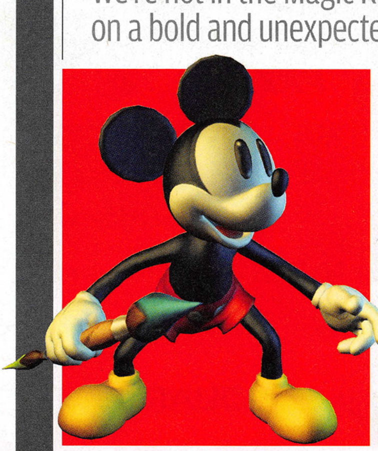
FANTASIA RISES

THE BROTHERS TOUCHDOWN



Building a Better Mouse

We're not in the Magic Kingdom anymore. Disney's beloved icon embarks on a bold and unexpected journey in the Wii-exclusive Epic Mickey.



Who would have imagined that one of next year's most intriguing Wii titles would star Mickey Mouse (without being called Kingdom Hearts)? As fond as we are of the character, he's not exactly known for pushing the envelope. But that could very well change with the fall release of Epic Mickey, a surprisingly dark and ambitious new adventure from publisher Disney Interactive and developer Junction Point. To learn all about it, we spoke with project director Warren Spector, who PC gamers know as the legendary designer behind such classics as System Shock, Deus Ex, and Thief: The Dark Project. —**STEVE T.**

WARREN SPECTOR

ON THE GAME'S CORE IDEA

"I started by saying, 'OK, if I remind Mickey of who he was and who he can be, what would I do?' And the first thing that came to mind is that I wanna remind him and remind players that he's a cartoon character. It's almost like, over the years, he's become like your favorite uncle. He's almost human. And he doesn't do the kind of impossible things that people expect from cartoon characters. I think that's a real shame because he used to do that stuff. He used to be able to remove his tail and use it as a sword. He used to stretch like a piece of taffy and bounce like a rubber ball. So that was kind of the starting point for me regarding the

character and his core abilities: how do I remind him that he's a cartoon character? And that led inevitably to, let's make a game that's all about drawing and erasing and painting and using paint thinner. Really remind him that he is made of paint. So that idea of returning him to his roots tied in nicely with the core gameplay. And when the opportunity came to make it on the Wii [console], I mean, drawing and erasing...Wii Remote...it all kind of works, right?

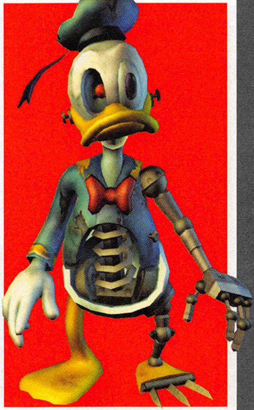
"Then layered on top of all that is this desire to remind Mickey and Disney and players and everybody that Mickey is a mischievous little guy. The mischief has been gone for a while, and I want to remind him that it's OK to be badly behaved. In *Plane Crazy* and *Steamboat Willie* and the early cartoons, he kind of abused farm animals and wrecked airplanes and got into sword fights...all this adventurous stuff. And even in *Fantasia*, in the early '40s, he would mess around with things he shouldn't have messed around with and cause a bunch of trouble, and then have to undo the trouble he caused. So that was a great starting point for a game character: a guy who gets himself in trouble and then has to get out. So everything sort of fits together: reinvention of the character, remind him he's a cartoon character, give him this ability to control the stuff of his own body, paint and paint thinner, the Wii. It all just sort of made sense, you know?"

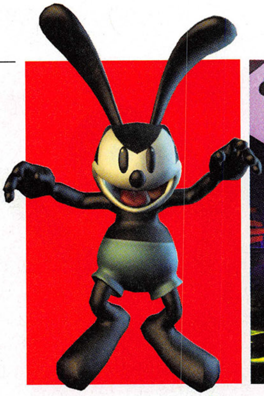
ON BEING GOOD OR BAD

"It's great to say that Mickey can be a mischievous mouse and get himself in trouble and behave badly, but if you've played any of the games I've worked on, pretty much every one of them is, at its heart, about player choice and the consequences of your choices. The heart of this game isn't me telling you what's important about Mickey Mouse or what makes him cool. It's every player deciding for himself what makes Mickey cool, and behaving appropriately. So you can behave badly and you can be mischievous and you can be destructive, and that will take you down a particular path. Some characters will like you, some won't. Some missions you might not get to do and others you will. But if you love Mickey the way he is right now—the friendly, helpful leader of the gang...everybody's friend—if you wanna be that guy, you can be that guy, too. Every player is going to get to decide how to deal with every problem in the game, and what you look like, what your abilities are, what missions you know about, who your friends are, how the world looks...it's all going to change based on whether you're this bad boy—we call him 'the Scrapper'—or you're the Hero Mickey. Or are you kind of a balance of both? Maybe sometimes you're good, sometimes you're bad, like all of us. We support that full range of possibilities of play style."

ON THE WONDERS OF PAINT THINNER

"The mechanics seem pretty simple, but they're actually pretty deep. I'll give you a simple example, but don't assume this is all there is to it. Using the power of thinner, you can erase an enemy that's coming at you and he'll just go away. Or you can erase the floor out from under him and he'll drop through. You can erase the ceiling above your head and climb up onto the next floor of wherever you happen to be. You can use your





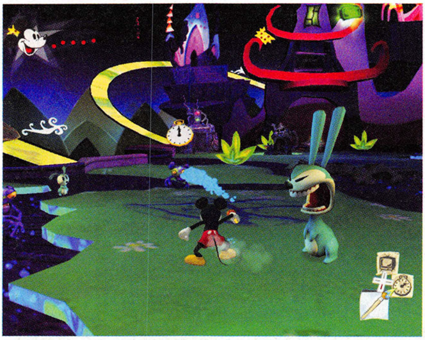
paint on him, and depending on a lot of factors that I'm not ready to talk about, you can change the way he feels about you. The whole idea is to empower players to be creative and to join us in the storytelling process. I don't tell stories *to* players, I tell stories *with* players. So the key for me at the end of the game is that every player has had a unique experience. And that unique experience comes from the world we create and the problems we set up, but also from how the player uses the tool set to solve those problems."

ON THE GAME'S WORLD

"One way to think about the world is that it's kind of a limbo world. It's kind of a way station for 80 years of Disney's forgotten and rejected creativity. So anything that Disney artists or Imagineers or book publishers came up with is fair game. When audiences tire of something or an animator decides that a sequence isn't good enough or Walt decided that a scene was going to make a movie too long and cut it or the 399 concept pieces that came before the one they used for a character we all know and love—all of that stuff is the stuff of our world. It's a world where all of these things that look familiar can be found, but they're all a little off and they don't quite belong together. And on top of that, Mickey inadvertently causes a problem in this world. He doesn't even know he's doing it, but he really creates some trouble for this world. And when he finds himself trapped there, he has to first learn that he's created a lot of the problems that he's seeing and a lot of the weirdness and dark twistedness. And then he has to figure out that he's kind of got to fix it or he's never going to get out."

ON OSWALD THE LUCKY RABBIT

"One of the real appeals to me about working on the game is the opportunity to bring back a character who used to be part of the Disney family and hasn't been for 80 years. Oswald was Walt's first cartoon star, and when he lost the contractual rights to Oswald in 1928; I mean, that's the only reason Mickey exists. That was such a great starting point for a story, you know? Older brother is rejected by his dad, resents the younger brother for stealing the limelight that should have been his. But he's not the villain. There is a big, bad villain in the game. But Mickey, in order to confront that villain and succeed in his goals, has to redeem Oswald. Regardless of your play style, whether you play Scrapper or Hero, you have to get Oswald to reengage with you and with his world. My hope is that we intrigue players enough about Oswald that we get to do some Oswald games down the line. He was the ultimate cartoony character in Disney's repertoire and we're gonna have some fun with him."



[Above] That rabbit with the gaping maw isn't an enemy; it's one of Oswald's children.

GAME WATCH
forecast

Wii

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel	Majesco	12/09
Arc Rise Fantasia	Ignition	SUM 10
Calling	Hudson	SPR 10
City Builder	Virtual Play Games	2/10
Data East Arcade Classics	Majesco	1/10
Def Jam Rapstar	4mm	HOL 09
EA Sports Active–Expansion Pack 1	Electronic Arts	HOL 09
Endless Ocean 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
Epic Mickey	Disney	FALL 10
F1 2009	Codemasters	11/09
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	1/10
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	12/09
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	1/10
Fragile: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	XSEED	1/10
Gladiator A.D.	TBA	TBA
Grease	505	TBA
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Guitar Hero Van Halen	Activision	12/09
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	Ubisoft	12/09
Just Dance	Ubisoft	11/09
Kamen Rider Dragon Knight: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/09
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	SUM 10
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	2010
Monado: Beginning of the World	Nintendo	TBA
Monkey Ball: Step & Roll	Sega	SPR 10
Monster Hunter Tri	Capcom	3/10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	Ubisoft	1/10
Planet 51	Sega	11/09
The Princess and the Frog	Disney	11/09
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Red Steel 2	Ubisoft	2/10
Resident Evil Archives: Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	1/10
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	NIS America	1/10
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	TBA
Scene It? Bright Lights! Big Screen!	Warner Bros.	11/09
Scene It? Twilight	Konami	11/09
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes	Capcom	2010
Shiren the Wanderer	Atlus	Q2 10
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	XSEED	1/10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	Q4 09
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	2/10
Span Smasher	Nintendo	TBA
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Nintendo	2010
Sushi Go Round	SouthPeak	1/10
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	Capcom	1/10
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
Trauma Team	Atlus	2010
Your Shape	Ubisoft	11/09

NINTENDO DS

Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	Capcom	2/10
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel	Majesco	12/09
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	Ubisoft	11/09
Crime Scene	SouthPeak	12/09
Dawn of Heroes	Majesco	12/09
Deca Sports DS	Hudson	SPR 10
Dementium II	SouthPeak	2/10
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
DJ Star	Deep Silver	Q4 09
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	1/10
Foto Fighter*	Konami	1/10
Ghost Trick	Capcom	2010
Glory of Heracles	Nintendo	2010
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
Grease	505	TBA
House M.D.	Legacy	HOL 09
Infinite Space	Sega	SPR 10
Kamen Rider Dragon Knight: The Video Game	D3Publisher	12/09
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	Nintendo	12/09
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Montessori Music	SouthPeak	Q1 10
MX vs. ATV Reflex	THQ	12/09
Picross 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Planet 51	Sega	11/09
Pokémon HeartGold	Nintendo	SPR 10
Pokémon SoulSilver	Nintendo	SPR 10
Prank Your Neighbor	Dream-catcher	TBA
The Princess and the Frog	Disney	11/09
Puzzle Chronicles	Konami	2/10
Ragnarok Online DS	XSEED	2010
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Sands of Destruction	Sega	1/10
Secret Flirts	SouthPeak	12/09
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	Atlus	SPR 10
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	2/10
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	Q4 09
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	Q4 09
WarioWare D.I.Y.	Nintendo	TBA
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA

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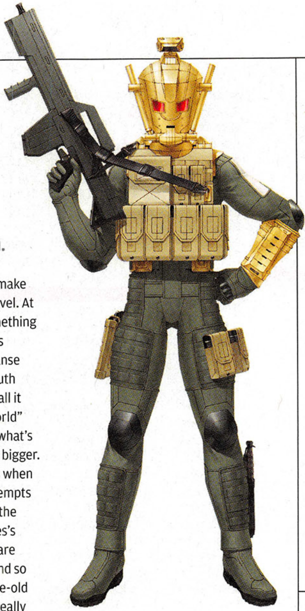
Journey Into Night

Atlus gives us goosebumps in the coldest place on Earth.

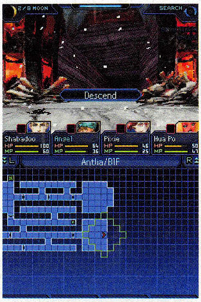


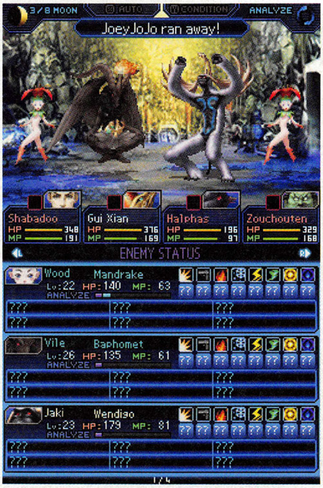
One of H.P. Lovecraft's most famous horror stories took place in the heart of the Antarctic. So did John Carpenter's classic chiller *The Thing*. There's something very scary about being trapped down there in the cold, and Atlus plans to tap that same vein for its next DS RPG thriller.

Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey, coming stateside next spring, takes place in a future where mankind is about to make a breakthrough in space travel. At the same time, though, something from elsewhere touches this planet—a strange dark expanse suddenly appears at the South Pole. Though researchers call it the Schwarzwelt—"black world" in German—nobody knows what's inside it...or why it's getting bigger.

The player's story begins when a crack team of soldiers attempts to penetrate the interior of the Schwarzwelt. The SMT series's familiar legions of demons are waiting on the other side, and so are some answers to the age-old question of whether we're really alone in this great-big universe.

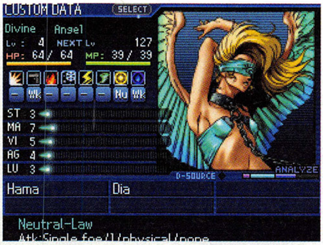
Gameplay-wise, Atlus promises to pull no punches. Strange Journey comes billed as a challenge on the level of the console SMT adventures, like Nocturne for the PlayStation 2. (Not surprising, really, considering what a tough cookie the DS strategy-RPG Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor proved to be.) Survival is a matter of talking or fighting your way past more than 300 species of demons—some of which might even be friendly, for a little while, which makes bribery and diplomacy just as handy as a quick trigger finger. On this adventure, chances are you'll need all the help you can get. **—DAVID S.**

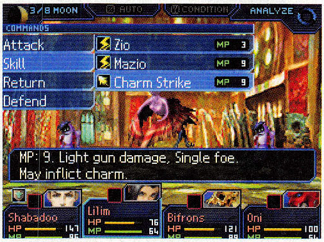

2/8 MOON
SEARCH
Descend
Shabadoo
Angel
Pixie
Hua Po
Antlia/B1F



Joey JoJo ran away!

3/8 MOON
AUTO
CONDITION
ANALYZE
Shabadoo HP 348 MP 191
Gui Xian HP 376 MP 169
Halphas HP 196 MP 97
Zouchouten HP 329 MP 168
ENEMY STATUS
Wood Mandrake Lv:22 HP:140 MP: 63
Vile Baphomet Lv:26 HP:135 MP: 61
Jaki Wendigo Lv:23 HP:179 MP: 81
ANALYZE
???
1/4


CUSTOM DATA
SELECT
Divine Angel
Lv : 4 NEXT Lv 127
HP: 64/ 64 MP: 39/ 39
Wk
Nu
Wk
ST 3
MA 7
VI 5
AG 4
LU 3
D-SOURCE
ANALYZE
Hama
Dia
Neutral-Law



MP: 9. Light gun damage. Single foe.
May inflict charm.

3/8 MOON
AUTO
CONDITION
ANALYZE
COMMANDS
Attack
Skill
Return
Defend
Zio MP 3
Mazio MP 9
Charm Strike MP 9
Shabadoo HP 147
Lilim HP 76 MP 64
Bifrons HP 121
Oni HP 100

Arc Rises Again

Wii-exclusive RPG Arc Rise Fantasia was released in Japan this past June, but it had been months since we last heard anything about a North American release. Turns out it was in the process of switching publishers. Ignition will now be bringing the game here next summer. **—STEVE T.**

Triple Threat

No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle for Wii will feature a third playable character (Travis Touchdown and Shinobu being the other two): Henry, Travis's twin brother. Not much is known about Henry's role in the game at this time, but executive director Suda51 tells us that it's going to be a "cool appearance." **—JUSTIN C.**

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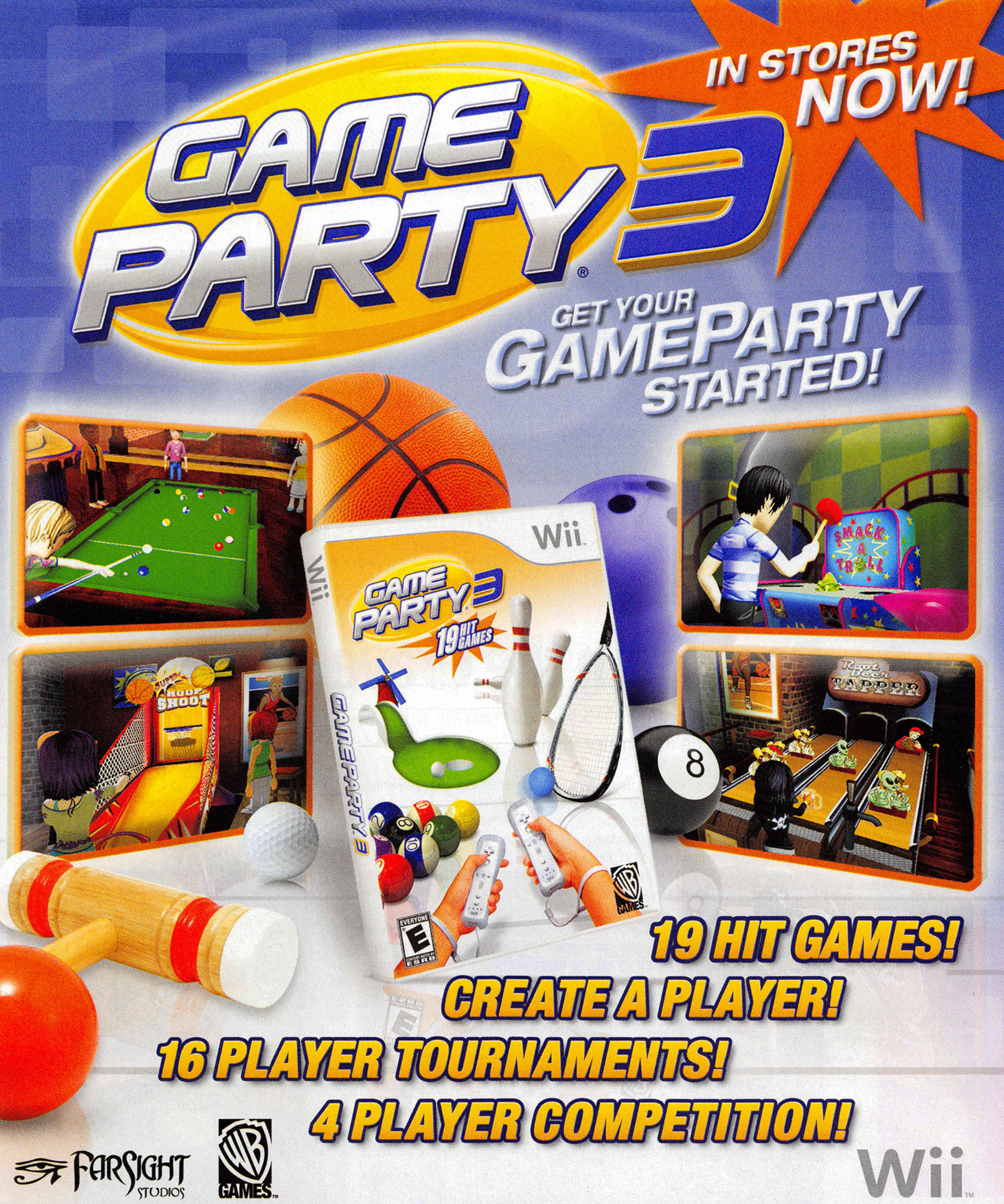
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Evolution of Shantae Part 2

VIRTUAL CONSOLE FEATURE
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DSiWARE REVIEWS
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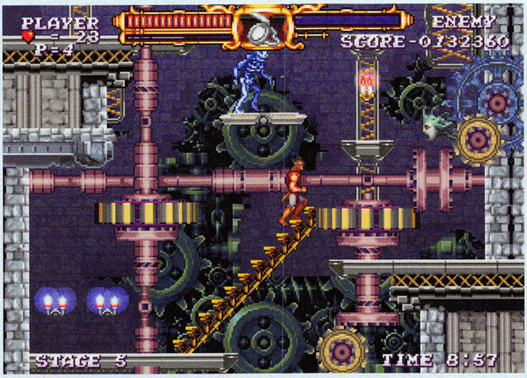
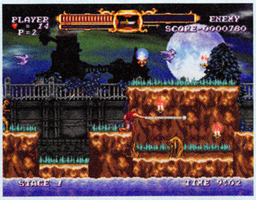
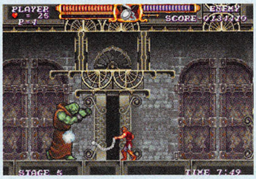

PLAYER
28
P=4
ENEMY
SCORE-0132360
STAGE 5
TIME 8:57


PLAYER
14
P=2
ENEMY
SCORE-0000780
STAGE 1
TIME 9:02


PLAYER
28
P=4
ENEMY
STAGE 5
TIME 7:49

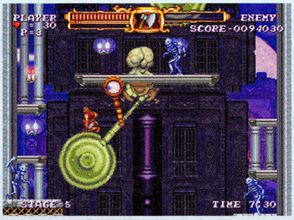
Back from the Grave

Konami revamps a horror classic on WiiWare with Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth.

Almost everybody loves vampires these days. Between the *Twilight* books and movies, HBO's *True Blood*, and the CW's *The Vampire Diaries*, these undead bloodsuckers have reached new heights of popularity. But you know who still doesn't like vampires? The Belmonts, video gaming's most renowned family of vampire hunters. And in Konami's Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth—which may be available for download on WiiWare by the time you read this—they're going to prove it by whipping Count Dracula and his legions of ghoulish minions back from whence they came.

Like Konami's previous ReBirth titles—Gradius ReBirth and Contra ReBirth—Castlevania: The Adventure ReBirth is a throwback to 2-D gaming of days gone by. But whereas the other ReBirth titles were new games inspired by classic gameplay, Castlevania is a full-fledged remake of one of the lesser-known games in the series—Castlevania: The Adventure, which was released on the original monochrome

Flame-spewing dragon skeletons? Check! Deadly clock tower? Check! Yep, this is Castlevania!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ENEMY
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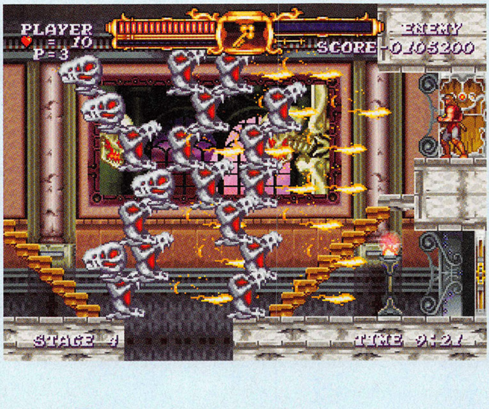
TIME 7:30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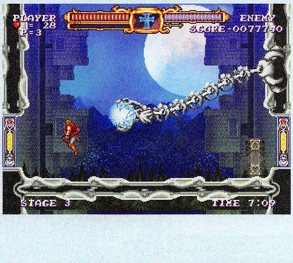
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STAGE 3
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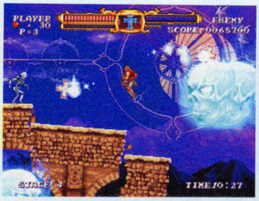
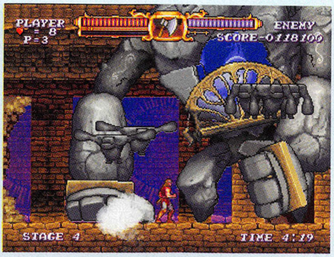


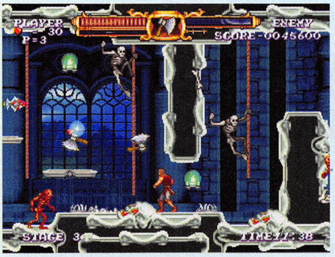


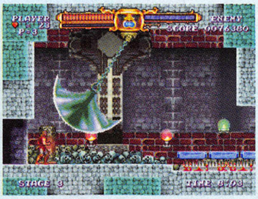
[Right] The bosses are way more imposing than those of the Game Boy original.

Game Boy 20 years ago.

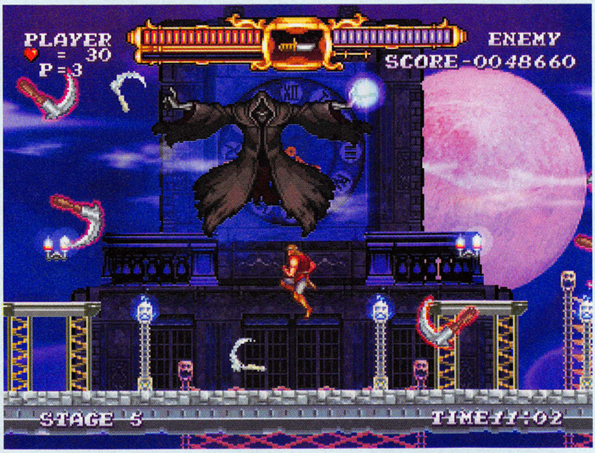
Despite the word *Adventure* in the title, this Castlevania game boasts all-out action. It's not about exploration or earning new abilities like in the recent Nintendo DS games; it's about progressing from stage to stage while using hero Christopher Belmont's jumping and whip-wielding skills to avoid traps and slay armies of skeletons, bats, flying medusa heads, eyeball monsters, and other creatures of the night. Like in the original Game Boy game, you'll be able to power up your whip with the ability to shoot fireballs, plus you'll acquire subweapons such as holy water, an axe, a dagger, a stopwatch, and a boomerang cross. Needless to say, it's been significantly enhanced over the Game Boy release; not only have the visuals been given a slick 16-bit-style overhaul, but there are more stages (six instead of four), new enemies and bosses, and improved controls. According to producer Koji Igarashi, the jumping controls, as well as some of the background elements, were influenced by the PlayStation classic Castlevania: Symphony of the Night.

Beyond vintage action, the game features multiple routes through the stages (some of which let you bypass midboss encounters) and multiple difficulty settings, so it won't be as bone-chillingly difficult as the original if you don't want it to be. Get ready, action fans—you'll likely want to sink your fangs into this one. **—CHRIS H.**





[Above] With decorations like this, you'd think Dracula doesn't want any visitors.



VENUSAUR

PASSWORD: 1589-3955

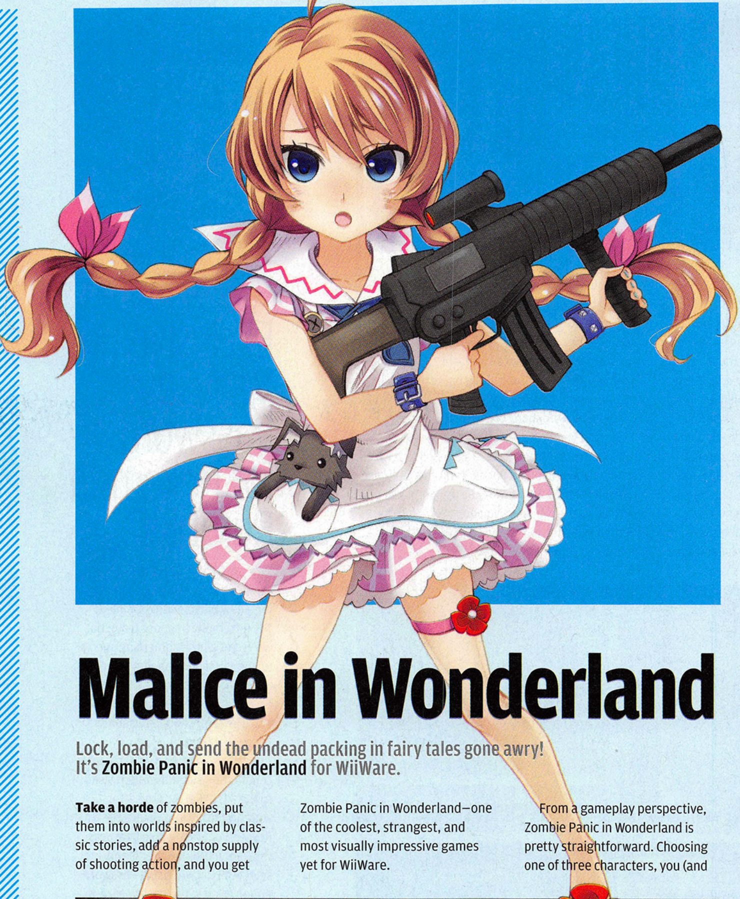
Exclusive Venusaur Password for Pokémon Rumble!

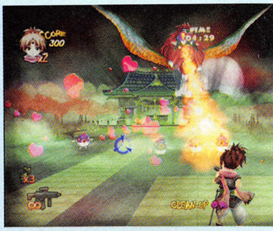
The world of Pokémon Rumble can be a tough place to compete for a new player with only a few Toy Pokémon to choose from, but we've got a little something special to give Nintendo Power readers a winning edge. By using the exclusive password shown above, you'll instantly add Venusaur to your collection!

Here's how to do it: When you've completed your subsequent visit to the Silent Forest area after your first foray into the Battle Royale, you will be able to access the Recruit Point. Enter it and select the Recruit Using Password option, type in the password, and Venusaur will be all yours! This is the easiest way to snag this powerful Grass-and-Poison-Type Toy Pokémon, which comes equipped with the crowd-clearing SolarBeam move.

For more cool passwords, be sure to visit www.pokemonrumble.com as the game's November 16th launch approaches. (And don't miss our review on page 33!)

—CHRIS SL.





Malice in Wonderland

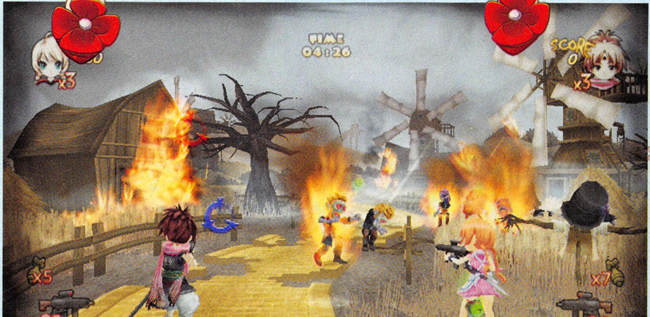
Lock, load, and send the undead packing in fairy tales gone awry! It's **Zombie Panic in Wonderland** for WiiWare.

Take a horde of zombies, put them into worlds inspired by classic stories, add a nonstop supply of shooting action, and you get Zombie Panic in Wonderland—one of the coolest, strangest, and most visually impressive games yet for WiiWare.

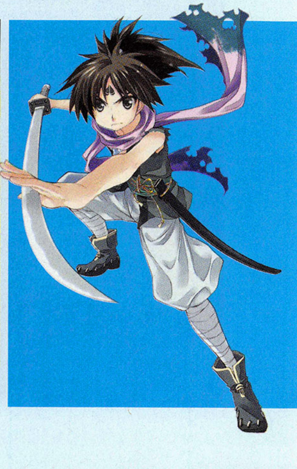
From a gameplay perspective, Zombie Panic in Wonderland is pretty straightforward. Choosing one of three characters, you (and a friend if you're playing in co-op mode) engage in fast-paced shooting action by moving with the Nunchuk controller's analog stick and aiming via the Wii Remote controller amidst gorgeous 3-D environments. As you might guess from the game's title, zombiemania is runnin' wild, and it's up to you to shoot, shoot, and shoot some more until you blow the zombies to smithereens.

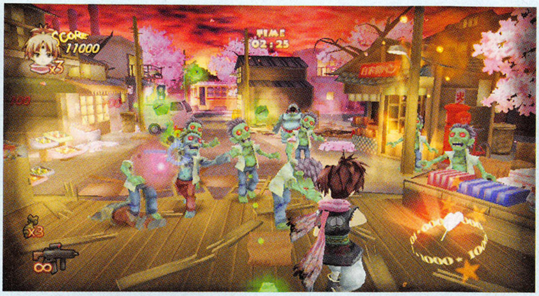
Less straightforward is the game's zany story—which, according to Spain-based publisher/developer Akaoni Games, involves "amorous zombies" and the mystery of the "scented dwarves." Just as quirky are the playable characters: Snow White, Dorothy (from *The Wizard of Oz*, complete with Toto in her pocket), and Momotaro (a lad who, according to Japanese folklore, was born from a peach). The game's nine stages are likewise inspired by the tales from which the protagonists originate.

If this all sounds somewhat familiar, there's a reason: similar themes were explored in the awesome but underappreciated shooter Little Red Riding Hood's Zombie BBQ (released last year for



There's nothing that storybook characters love better than the smell of roasting zombies in the morning!




SCORE
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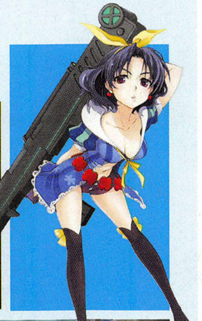
x3
TIME
02:25
x3
∞

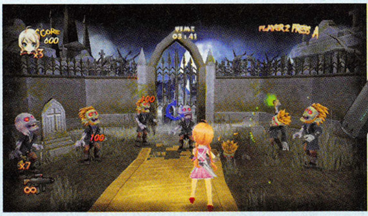
the Nintendo DS handheld). Jose Manuel Iniguez, director of Zombie Panic in Wonderland and CEO of Akaoni Games, was even the producer, designer, and artistic coordinator on Zombie BBQ. "I have always been fascinated with zombies and the depth of popular short stories and their characters," he admits. "[Zombie Panic in Wonderland] is the game of zombies and fairy tales that I have always wanted to make."

Of course, even if you don't give a hoot about the game's fairy-tale origins, you'll still have a blast shredding brain-hungry bad guys. Environments are fully destructible (and combustible) and feature level-specific enemies and bosses, plus you can power up with numerous weapons, including two different types of machine guns, a flamethrower, grenades, a knuckle duster, a knife, and a katana. And while the zombies are trying to feast on brains, you'll get a feast for the senses; the 3-D graphics are among the best yet on WiiWare, and they're augmented by slick manga-style character designs. The sound is receiving equal attention; in one of the Japanese-themed stages, for example, the game features a vocal-heavy song performed by a Japanese opera singer.

But more than anything, the game is inspired by frantic, fun, action-packed arcade shoot-'em-ups—and it's a good reason to blast lots of zombies. "Zombies are the best excuse to have fun shooting at something without feeling any remorse. They have no family or feelings and they are already dead," asserts Iniguez. "Zombies are bad and scary. No one can refute it. When you shoot them they explode, splatter, stain.... They're great."

The team at Akaoni hopes to have Zombie Panic in Wonderland finished up by the end of 2009. —**CHRIS H.**

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TIME
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PLAYER2 PRESS A
x7
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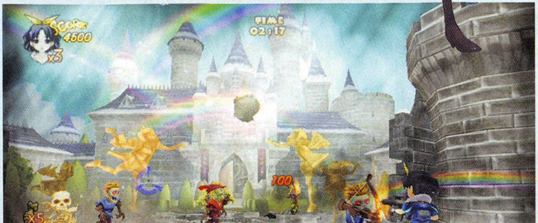
SCORE
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x3
TIME
02:17
100
x5
∞

CLOUDS
WHEN PIGS FLY
NEED THAT!!!
THIS WILL GET ME THERE!
USE YOUR FREQUENT FLIER MILES
PEACOCK
HITCH A RIDE
CALL ON A SIREN
WHICH CAME FIRST?
IF YOU WRITE IT IT WILL COME.
SCRIBBLENAUTS™
Write Anything. Solve Everything.
AVAILABLE NOW
HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF
TURN IT UP!
KOI
NINTENDO DS
5TH CELL
WB GAMES
EVERYONE 10+
Cartoon Violence
Comic Mischief
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org
TM & © WBEI (s09)

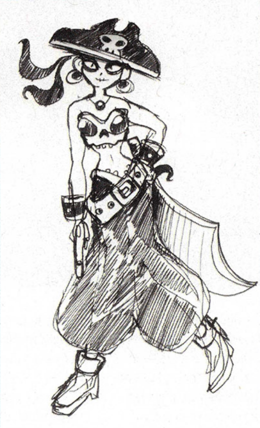
Arr, Give Me Booty!

The excitement surrounding DSiWare game **Shantae: Risky's Revenge** continues with a look at pirate bad girl Risky Boots.

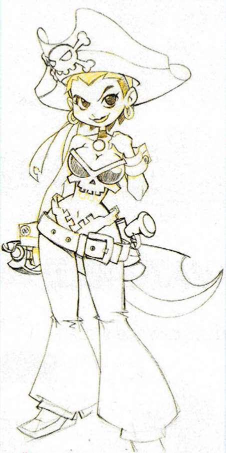
A heroine is only as good as the villains she has to face. Which is why Shantae—the half-genie star of the highly anticipated DSiWare adventure Shantae: Risky's Revenge—needs a suitably strong nemesis to challenge her. Enter nefarious female pirate Risky Boots—the brazen, villainous (and pasty) self-proclaimed queen of the high seas. A capable villainess, Risky has her own army of robotic Tinkerbats to help her execute her plans, which clearly include exacting vengeance on Shantae for when they clashed on Game Boy Color. Once again we spoke to Shantae mastermind and WayForward creative director Matt Bozon—who got the inspiration for Risky's name from an item in a PC game—to get insights and sketches that show how the character has evolved since her inception.

ABOUT THE WRITER:

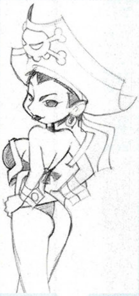
Matt Bozon is the creative director of WayForward and has been in the gaming industry for 15 years. His all-time favorite games include The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, Super Metroid, and Mega Man 2.



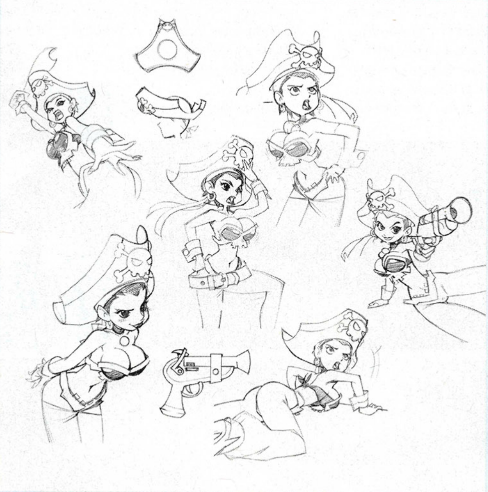
1999 "This is the first image of the pirate ghost Risky Boots. For the GBC game Shantae needed a different kind of villain, which I figured would be a one-time foe. I was going for a full-body skeleton tattoo, but soon landed on this crazy getup. Her trademark skull bustier is definitely the product of a 2:00 am Mountain Dew and Funyuns binge. Sorry, everyone."



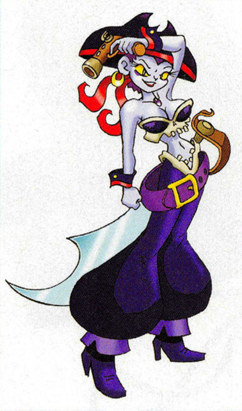
2007 "Along with [manga-style artist] Robert DeJesus's take on Shantae came this version of Risky. It retains the curviness of the previous design, but gives some structure to the pirate gear that was missing before. And like some enchanted king of wood elves, Robert gave unto Risky an actual pirate's hat that fit."

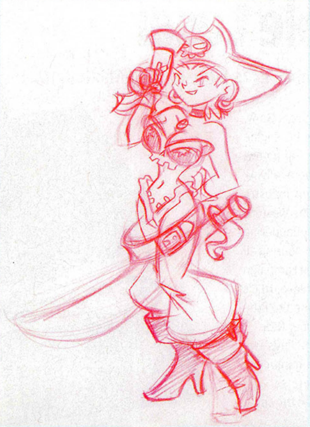


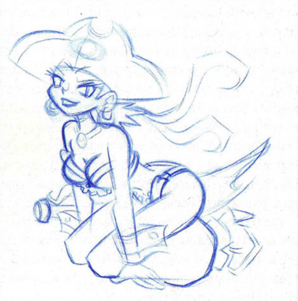
2007 "Continuing the trend of bootylicious curves, Robert gave us this more 'detestable' Risky design, enforcing the idea that players should love to hate her. It also marks the first time we saw Risky from behind after all these years, and there were some mysteries to work out. It's worth noting that since this is a black-and-white sketch...I can assure you she *is* wearing pants."



2008 "By the end of Risky's DS development process, we landed at this model sheet. It depicts a lot of cool poses and really shows the character's potential for strutting her stuff. I hope players will enjoy knocking that smug smile off her face in the game."







2001 "This is the Risky image that was used to promote the game. Early on I'd dropped the undead 'ghost' theme in order to not detract from Rottytops, though I did keep her skin a bleached bone color. I started using the skull face in her outfit in more emotive ways and made her more vain and showy. The hat, admittedly, never made sense. My only exposure to hats like that came from lobster-restaurant menus you can fold and wear on your head."

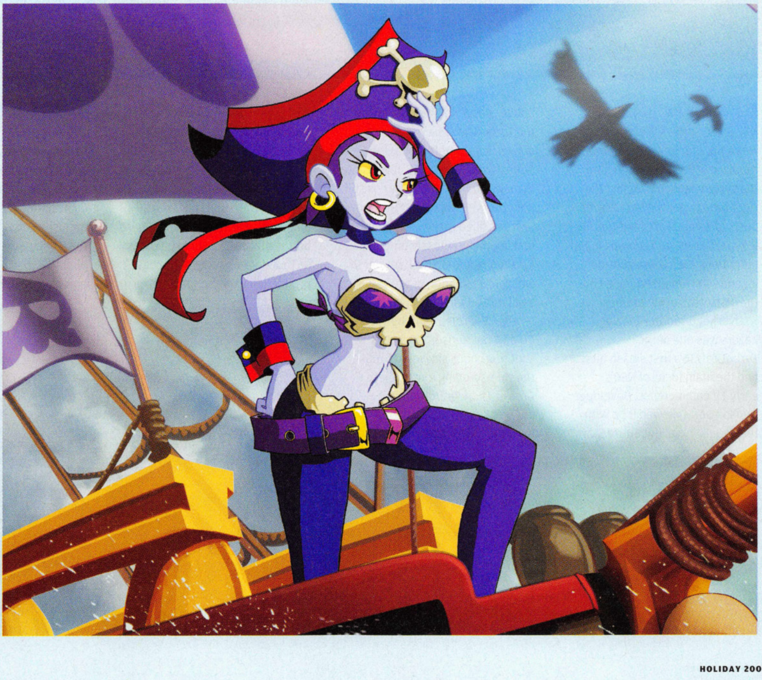
2004 "When working on the [unreleased] GBA game, I tried to make Risky more appealing and likable as a permanent member of the cast. Other than some smoothing out, I didn't do much with the design. Most of Risky's development was in backstory to make her a more knowable villain. Players will see some of that put to use in Risky's Revenge."

2005 "Luke Brookshier animated a lot of the GBC game, and saw the need to get Shantae and Risky to contrast better, making Shantae a girl and Risky a woman. He suggested more-ladylike proportions, gave her some junk in the trunk. Luke currently writes and storyboards the *SpongeBob* TV show. I suppose he's drawing more corners than curves these days. For the record, I drew the crumby hat in this image."

2009

"This concept image with Risky on her ship was used as part of the reveal for Risky's Revenge. Afterwards we saw the need to put a little more meat on the gal, as her arms were looking a little gamey.

I imagine future designs will sharpen her up again, as she's taking on a sort of balloon-animal quality. Here's to a Risky future."



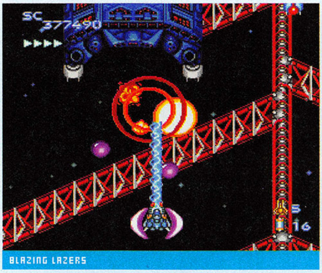
16 Bit's Loveable Loser

We celebrate 20 years of the *other* participant in the 16-bit wars: the TurboGrafx16.

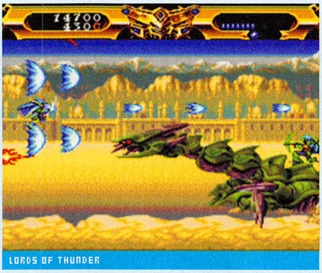
Once upon a time, Nintendo's greatest rival was not Sega, Sony, or Microsoft, but electronics giant NEC. The company's PC Engine console was selling like gangbusters in Japan, its library of games was growing rapidly, and the industry's top third parties were rallying behind it. All NEC needed to cement its status as a major industry player was to capture a similar level of success in the Western markets. But needless to say, that did not happen. After squandering its yearlong Japanese head start on the Genesis and then pouring all of the company's marketing dollars into a bizarre regional campaign that left most of the US unaware of the platform's existence, NEC's launch of the rebranded "TurboGrafx16" console amounted to little more than a speed bump for the Sega Genesis and the Super NES.

But we are not here to chronicle the TurboGrafx16's failings—we are here to celebrate its triumphs. The platform had a number of great games, and thanks to Nintendo's Virtual Console service, those titles are now available to a far wider audience than they ever were in the system's heyday.

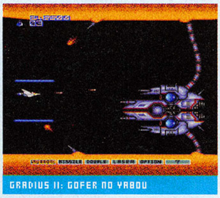
NEC
TURBOGRAFX
TURBOPAD



BLAZING LAZERS



LORDS OF THUNDER



GRADIUS II: GOFER NO YABOU

At Home in Deep Space

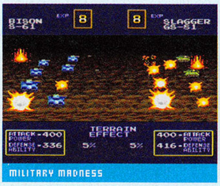
NEC loved space shooters. It was a popular genre, the games required little localization, and the system launched at just the right time to get the best arcade ports of seminal arcade titles like R-Type, Darius, and Gradius II. But ultimately, even these coin-op legends were overshadowed by the platform's original titles.

Overhead shooter Blazing Lazers was one of the TurboGrafx16's first smash hits, and the main focus of NEC's early TV commercials. Developer Hudson Soft followed it up with the equally excellent Super Star Soldier and Soldier Blade, giving the TurboGrafx16 a rich library of overhead shooters that the Genesis and Super NES never quite managed to match. The series still holds up well today, and Hudson Soft has filled in the gaps by making the previously unreleased Final Soldier and Star Parodier (a whimsical lampoon of the series) available on Virtual Console.

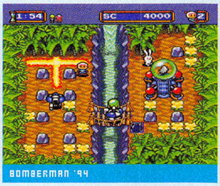
After the release of the Turbo CD add-on, Hudson turned its shooting chops sidewise to make the side-scrolling masterpiece Gate of Thunder. Although it only really used its CD media for an excellent soundtrack, the game was so well received that it eventually became a pack-in for later configurations of the console. Hudson followed up its success with Lords of Thunder, which swapped the usual spaceships-and-aliens motif for a winged hero battling fantastical beasts. Lords of Thunder has some of the best production values on the platform, and its grinding guitar-rock soundtrack still holds a cherished place on many a shooter fan's iPod.

A Classic for Every Cult

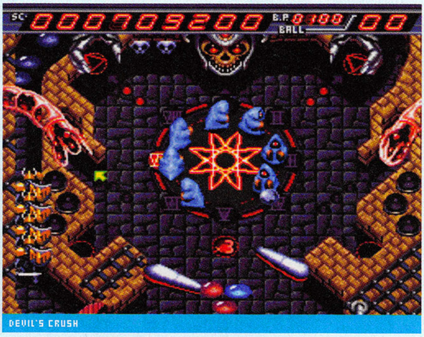
The TurboGrafx16 never managed to dominate any other genre the way it did for shooters, but it made a lasting mark in several obscure niches. Naxat's TurboGrafx16-exclusive Alien Crush popularized the video pinball genre, offering a digital pinball board full of moving parts and squirming aliens that



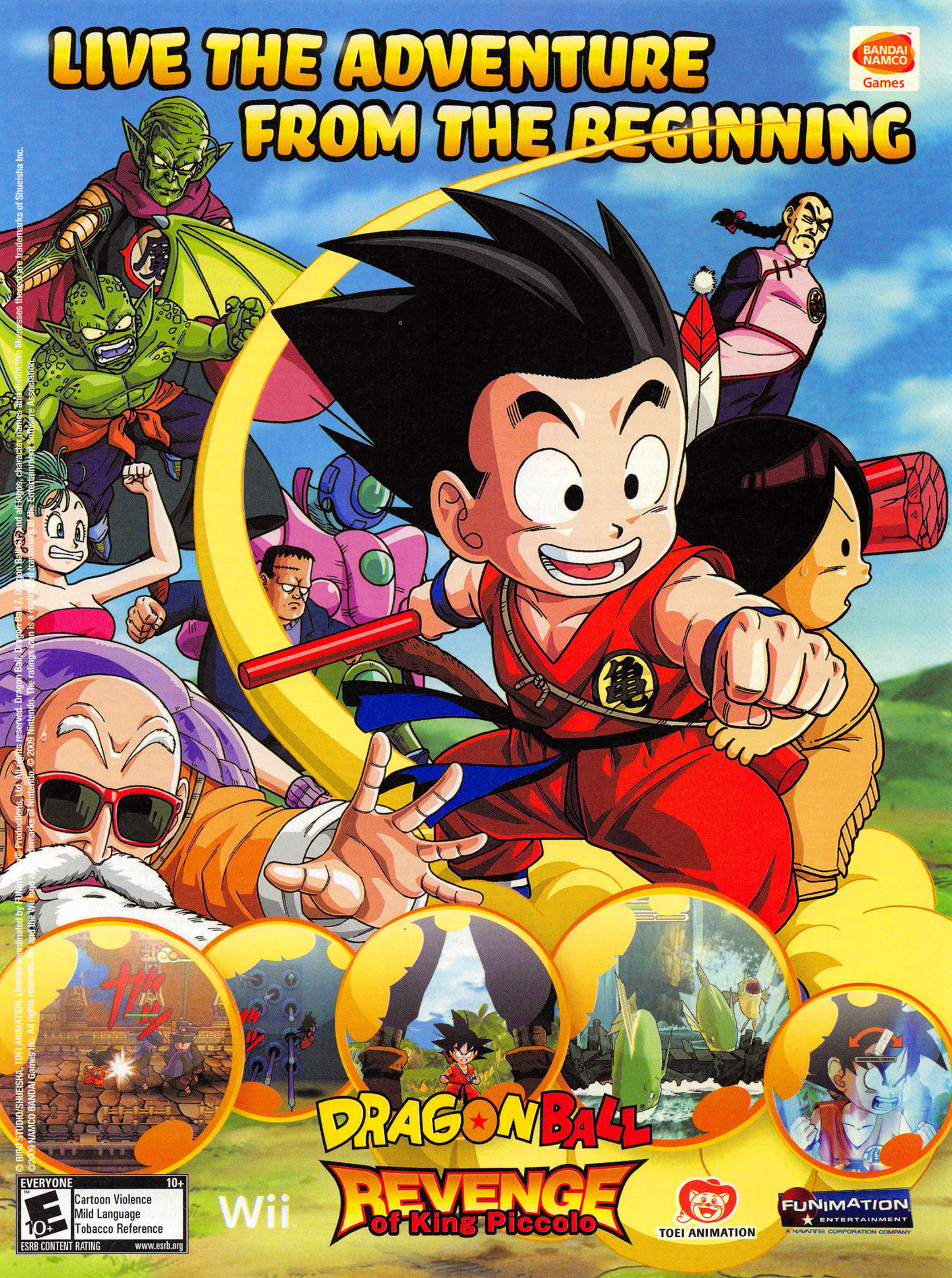
MILITARY MADNESS



BOMBERMAN '94



DEVIL'S CRUSH


LIVE THE ADVENTURE FROM THE BEGINNING
BANDAI NAMCO Games
DRAGON BALL
REVENGE of King Piccolo
Wii
EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
Cartoon Violence
Mild Language
Tobacco Reference
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org
TOEI ANIMATION
FUNIMATION ENTERTAINMENT
A NAVARRE CORPORATION COMPANY

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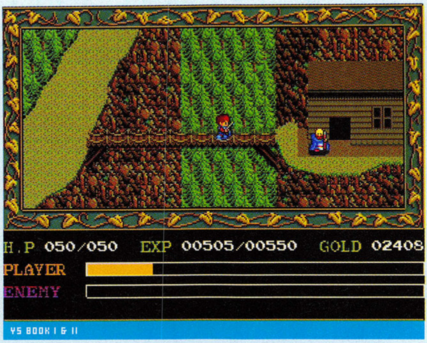
no physical pinball machine could ever replicate. It wasn't easy selling players on a game in which they controlled nothing more than a pair of digital flippers, but Alien Crush became a big enough cult hit to spawn a sequel, Devil's Crush, which improved upon its predecessor in every possible way.

With an optional TurboTap accessory that allowed five controllers to be plugged in at once, the TurboGrafx16 was the platform that transformed Bomberman from a lonely puzzle game into one of the greatest party-game series of all time. Both the classic Bomberman '93 and the previously Japan-only Bomberman '94 have found their way to Virtual Console, and still stand among the finest entries in the series.

The TurboGrafx16 also distinguished itself in the field of turn-based strategy, with the classic Military Madness (Nectaris in Japan), and its never-localized sequel, Neo Nectaris. This beloved classic has inspired an upcoming WiiWare remake titled Military Madness: Nectaris, but those who prefer the old-school graphics (or just want to save a few Wii Points) can still download the original on Virtual Console.

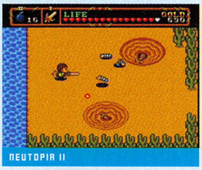
A Few Memorable Quests

The tightwads at NEC and Hudson Soft balked at localizing the many epic RPGs that were the CD-ROM attachment's main selling point in Japan, but they did want at least one showpiece for their $400 peripheral, and they chose Ys Book I & II, a port of two games from a popular Japanese PC series. It was a mind-blowing title: Two full games on one disc! Crystal-clear voices from professional actors! A CD-quality soundtrack! Ys Book I & II set a high bar for TurboGrafx16 CD-based games that would rarely be met again. Nineteen years later, the game's no-button, bump-into-foes combat feels a bit rusty, but modern players who are able to endure such quirks should still find a lot to like. Ys has a unique and flavorful world, some really great bosses, and a wonderful soundtrack. It's definitely worth a download.



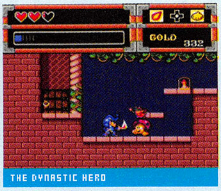
YS BOOK I & II

Upon their release, Hudson Soft's Neutopia games were roundly criticized for being brazen rip-offs of the Legend of Zelda. Nowadays, that's exactly what makes them interesting. With lots of cool items and a puzzle-filled world that scrolls by one screen at a time, Neutopia and Neutopia II feel like the Legend of Zelda sequels that Nintendo might have made had they opted for derivative follow-ups instead of truly innovative sequels.



NEUTOPIA II

Westone's Wonder Boy franchise produced some of the best side-scrolling action-RPGs of the 8- and 16-bit eras. The series is strongly associated with Sega platforms, but the games also came out on the TurboGrafx16, with different characters and titles. (Westone licensed the games to all comers, allowing publishers to rebrand them as they chose.) Dragon's Curse is the definitive version of the Master System game more widely known as Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap, and it's the only version of the game available on Virtual Console. This side-scrolling adventure plays like a cross between Castlevania and The Legend of Zelda II, and features a hero who is repeatedly cursed with different monster forms that allow him to reach new regions of a vast side-scrolling world. Its follow-up was less imaginative, but a whole lot prettier. It was called Wonder Boy in Monster World on the Genesis and The Dynastic Hero on the TurboGrafx16. Both versions are available on Virtual Console, forcing players to choose between the slightly better graphics of the Genesis version and the animated intro and orchestrated soundtrack of the TurboGrafx CD-ROM release.

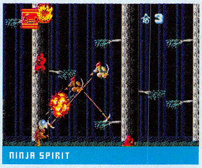


THE DYNASTIC HERO

Bonk and More?

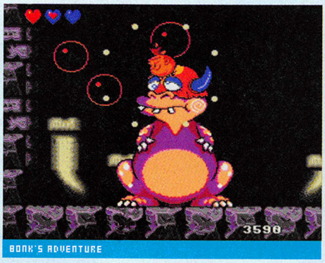
The TurboGrafx16 was no slouch in the action/adventure genre, although you'd never guess it from looking at its Virtual Console lineup. There's no sign of the popular Legendary Axe action/adventures, the delightfully cheesy Valis series, or the renowned Dracula X: Rondo of Blood, a landmark entry in the Castlevania series that debuted in Japan just as the platform folded in the West (although it is available on Virtual Console in Japan).

The highlight of the North American Virtual Console's limited catalog of TG16 action titles is Irem's Ninja Spirit, a graphically impressive sword-based platformer that combines the high-leaping ninja theatrics of Ninja Gaiden and Shinobi with the frenzied pace and power-up structure of a shooter. Ninja Spirit was a critical smash when it launched in 1990, but its flickery visuals haven't aged well.

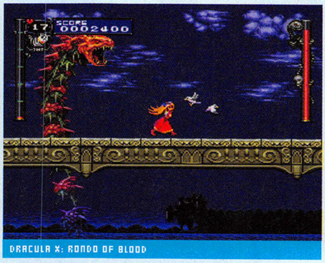


NINJA SPIRIT

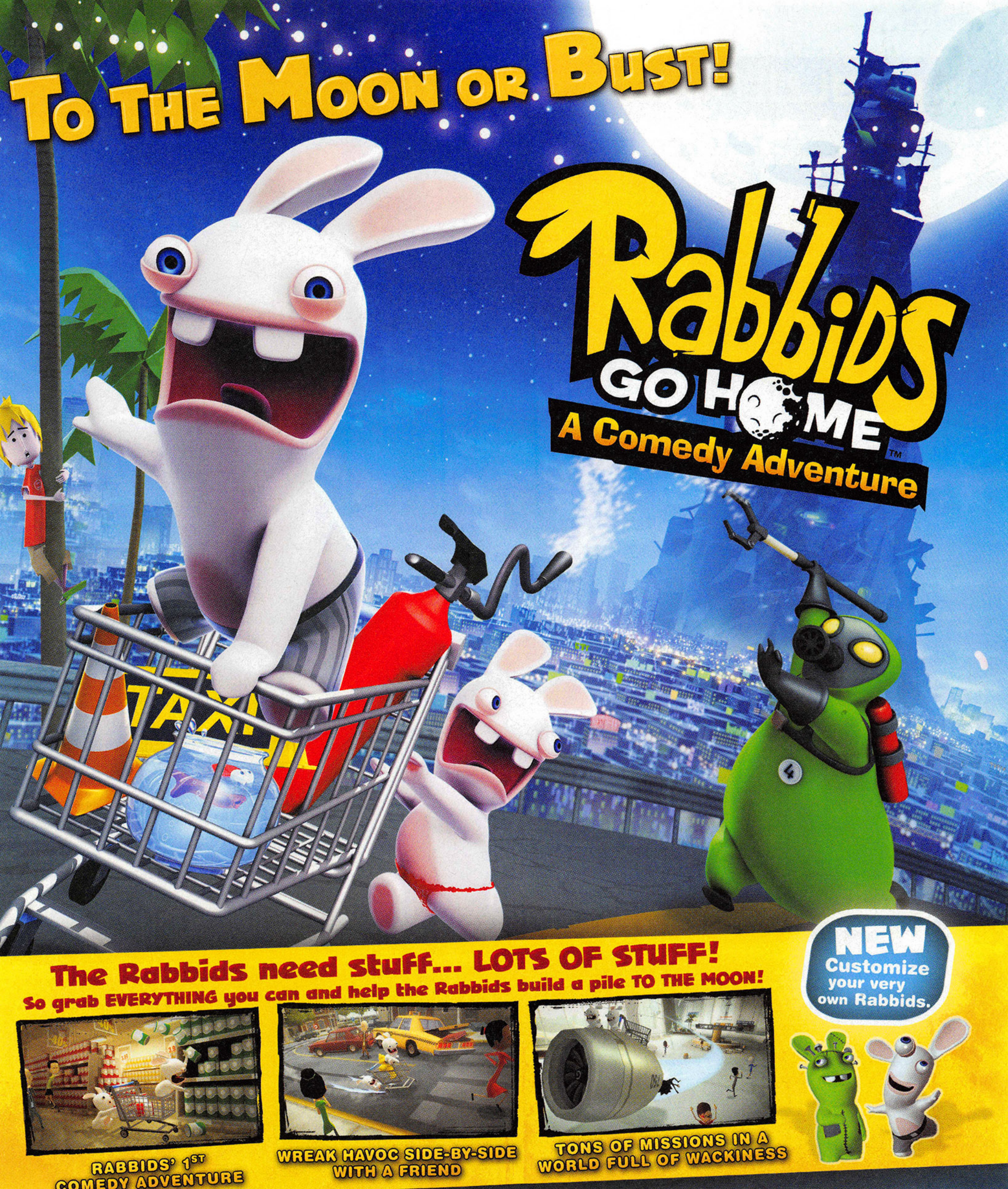
Beyond that, there's the famous Bonk's Adventure series, in which an adorable caveman leaps, dives, and headbutts his way through a brightly colored prehistoric world. Bonk was designed to be the TurboGrafx16's mascot, and the developers of the series churned out three solid action-platformers and two decent shooters in the Air Zonk spin-off series (because heaven knows the TurboGrafx needed more shooters!) during the console's brief life. Bonk was cute and all of the games were good, but the dim-witted caveman just couldn't compete with the likes of Sonic the Hedgehog and Super Mario World. Both too little and too late, Bonk turned out to be the perfect mascot for the TurboGrafx16 after all. —**CASEY L.**



BONK'S ADVENTURE



DRACULA X: RONDO OF BLOOD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EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare

ARKANOID PLUS!

PUBLISHER: **TAITO**
GENRE: **ACTION/PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **600**

Arkanoid's block-busting gameplay may be old, but there's a reason it's remained relatively unchanged for over 20 years—it's still darn addictive. It's a pure test of skill that requires quick reflexes and precise aim to bounce the Energy Ball where you need it to go. There are plenty of single-player levels, and the two-player mode adds a competitive element. The control can be a bit sluggish, though; a motion-based option would have been nice. —PHIL T.

Recommended

WiiWare

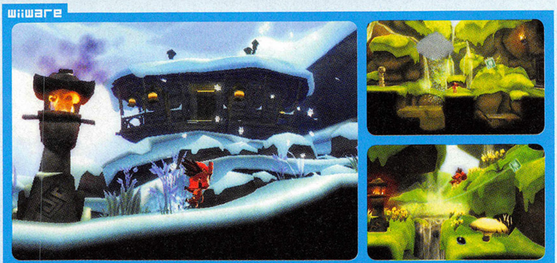
DRIIFT MANIA

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
GENRE: **RACING**
Wii POINTS: **800**

In the mid to late '80s, you couldn't set foot in an arcade without spotting a Super Sprint or Ivan "Ironman" Stewart's Super Off Road machine. Since then, the top-down racer has become an endangered species, so the subpar Driift Mania feels like a missed opportunity. The biggest culprit is the controls, which seem to take your inputs as little more than a suggestion. The wonky, inconsistent physics don't help matters, nor does the grating music. —STEVE T.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



LOSTWINDS: WINTER OF THE MELODIAS

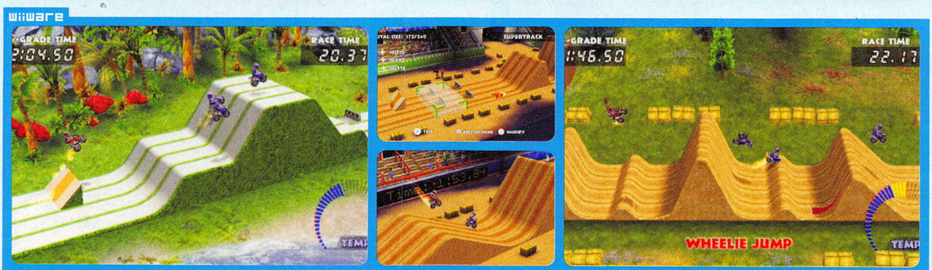
PUBLISHER: **FRONTIER** · GENRE: **ADVENTURE** · Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Phil T's Pick

LostWinds was arguably the best game to appear on WiiWare when the service debuted, making this a very welcome sequel. As before, the main gameplay mechanic involves utilizing the power of wind to help move the main character, Toku, though his world. Using waves of the Wii Remote to activate Toku's jumps and attacks can be tricky at first, but it soon becomes second nature. The most significant new addition is Toku's ability to change the seasons between winter and summer. Doing so affects the environment (you can swim in previously frozen lakes, for instance), typically opening up new areas to explore. Mastering the seasonal control and Toku's wind-based skills is essential for getting past the many clever puzzles throughout the world. The rewarding control scheme combined with the beautiful graphics and mellow soundtrack give this game a very relaxed feel that perfectly complements it storybook-style presentation.

Recommended

WiiWare



EXCITEBIKE WORLD RALLY

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** · GENRE: **RACING** · Wii POINTS: **1000**

Chris Sl's Pick

As a child of the 8-bit '80s, what thrills me the most about this game is that—unlike the similarly branded Excitebike 64, Excite Truck, and Excitebots—World Rally is 100% classic Excitebike. Fans who remember the 24-year-old NES original will get a kick out of the rockin' remakes of its tunes, the return of the classic track editor, and the series's unique brand of arcade-style racing. Admittedly, the game won't hold the same appeal for 16- and 64-bit kids, but it's fun even without the nostalgia.

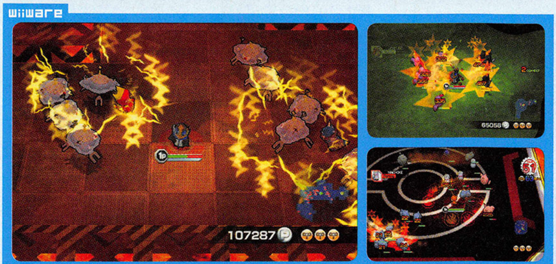
The racing in Excitebike is as arcadey as it gets—you compete against the clock instead of against the other riders, who serve only as obstacles. The core mechanic lies in angling your bike during jumps so that you land flat on your tires, which keeps you speeding onward without slowing down. Midair adjustments are made by pressing left or right on the Control Pad, but the new default method has you tilt the Wii Remote (held sideways). This works great, and when swooshing from one ramp to the next, the tilting motions give the action a satisfyingly fluid feel.

World Rally can be played from the same side view that the NES game used, but the new three-quarters perspective works better. In fact, all of the tweaks made to the original formula are improvements, such as ramps that morph out of the ground and the addition of online multiplayer. You can even upload your custom-made tracks to friends.

On the downside, the graphics aren't so hot (have fan-packed stands ever looked worse?), and the main World Tour mode can be raced through in just a couple of hours. (Going for an S rank on every track stretches out the challenge quite a bit, however.) Overall, Excitebike World Tour comes highly recommended for anyone who fondly remembers the NES Excitebike or loves old-school arcade racing.

Recommended

WiiWare



POKÉMON RUMBLE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** • GENRE: **ACTION** • Wii POINTS: **1500**

Carolyn G's Pick

With the same supercute style as My Pokémon Ranch, Pokémon Rumble captures the joyous obsession of collecting Pokémon in a bite-sized beat-'em-up package. Instead of training the Toy Pokémon you capture, you continually upgrade to stronger Toy Pokémon by brawling your way through increasingly tough areas, where the difficulty curve is just enough to be satisfying without being frustrating. The action is fast and frenzied, but thankfully it's not devoid of strategy; Type strengths and weaknesses are intact, and each Pokémon can have up to two moves at a time, varying from melee to ranged attacks as well as status-affecting moves. To sweeten the deal, you can play through all the stages and Battle Royale arenas with up to three friends cooperatively, while simultaneously competing for the highest KO count. While not as robust as a full-priced Pokémon game, it's definitely a welcome diversion until Pokémon HeartGold and SoulSilver Versions come out next year. If you're still on the fence, a free demo of Pokémon Rumble is available for download at the Wii Shop Channel.

Recommended

WiiWare

GRAVITRONIX

PUBLISHER: **MEDAVERSE STUDIOS**
GENRE: **PARTY GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

This futuristic take on air hockey features one fairly clever idea—up to eight people can play simultaneously (not online, however). Unfortunately, it's highly unlikely that you'll find anyone who will want to play with you. The sluggish and inaccurate motion controls are frustrating and some questionable physics often leave projectiles floating lazily in the center of the arena, well out of anyone's reach. This results in extremely dull matches. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare

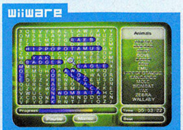
SHOOTANTO: EVOLUTIONARY MAYHEM

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **500**

You begin Shootanto as a lowly monkey who flings feces at his enemies. That alone makes for a pretty interesting light-gun-style shooter, and just as intriguing is how you evolve into a more advanced warrior as the game progresses. The gameplay, however, is rather primitive. Character movement is unresponsive, and each level consists of a single-screen environment that gets boring despite relentless foes. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

WiiWare



WORD SEARCHER

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Word Searcher is exactly what it sounds like—a digital version of those pencil-and-paper word-search games that you probably played in school or found in the back of magazines. And if that's what you're looking for, the game delivers—it's got randomly generated puzzles in a whopping 100 categories. The average gamer, however, will likely fall asleep from boredom after a few puzzles, and the no-frills production values don't help matters. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

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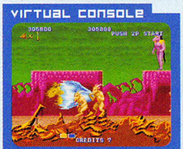


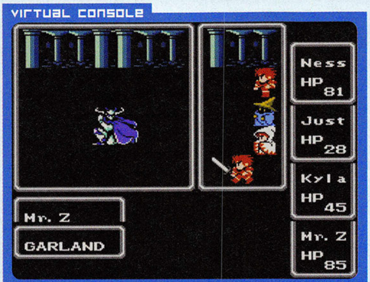
ALTERED BEAST

PLATFORM: **ARCADE**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

Though Altered Beast gets a bad rap from some NP staffers, I rather enjoy its unique hook of being able to transform into different were-creatures with distinct abilities; turning into a mighty beast-man is pretty empowering. The problem is that there's not much difference between this and the Genesis version, which is already on Virtual Console. Sure, this one is better animated, but the controls are less responsive. For hardcore fans only. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



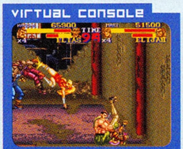
FINAL FANTASY

PLATFORM: **NES** • PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX/NINTENDO**
GENRE: **RPG** • ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1990**

Final Fantasy is an epic series with a well-deserved reputation for quality, and I consider myself a pretty big fan. This original entry in the franchise, however, doesn't hold up particularly well after all these years. True, it has an epic quest, loads of weapons and magic spells, numerous character classes, multiple vehicles, and a lot of the features that have become synonymous with RPGs. But it also has tediously slow battles, an archaic interface, lots of level-grinding, and a lack of characterization. It's cool to see where Final Fantasy came from, but only the most hardcore would want to go back. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



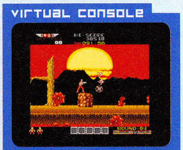
FINAL FIGHT 2

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

The original Final Fight is one of my all-time favorite games, but this sequel doesn't quite maintain that game's level of quality. In some ways, Final Fight 2 manages to improve on its SNES predecessor (more levels, more playable characters, co-op play), but in other ways it's a step back; the stages, music, sound effects, enemy designs, and moves just aren't as inspired. It's a decent beat-'em-up, but not a great one. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



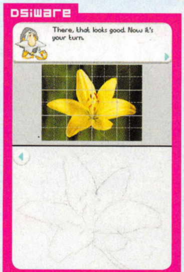
RYGAR

PLATFORM: **ARCADE**
PUBLISHER: **TECMO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1986**

Equipped with a spinning wheel o' destruction called the Diskarmor, you fight and jump your way through a series of side-scrolling stages in this very challenging action title. Fortunately, the frustration of constantly dying is partially offset by the fact that you have an unlimited number of continues. Well, until you reach the final handful of levels, that is; at that point you're forced to restart the entire game if you lose all of your lives. **—JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



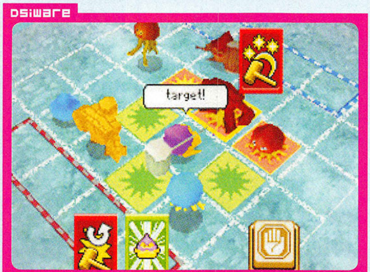
ART ACADEMY: SECOND SEMESTER

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

This art tutorial contains the exact same drawing program as its predecessor and only a handful of new lessons. It's a great concept that's well executed, but the price tag is simply too high. **—PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



DRAGON QUEST WARS

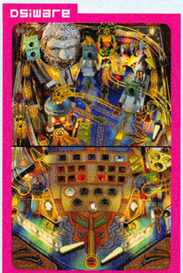
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** • GENRE: **STRATEGY** • NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Phil T's Pick

With Intelligent Systems, the creators of Nintendo's Fire Emblem series, as its developer, it's no surprise that Dragon Quest Wars is a quality title. It may not be the deepest strategy game out there, but its relatively simple nature makes it easy to pick up and play. Since the single-player experience is limited to a handy training mode and a few matches against the CPU, the bulk of the game rests in the multiplayer mode, which, thankfully, supports online play. Dragon Quest fans will appreciate the authentic music, and the low price tag is tough to beat.

Recommended

DSIWARE



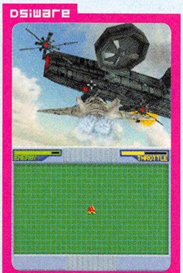
PINBALL PULSE: THE ANCIENTS BECKON

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PINBALL**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Pinball Pulse: The Ancients Beckon isn't based on a real pinball table, but it plays like it is; this is a challenging game with an authentic feel and an interesting board design. There's only one table, but that's fine for what you pay. **—CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSIWARE



THORIUM WARS

PUBLISHER: **BIG JOHN GAMES**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **1,000**

Thorium Wars has solid graphics and controls, but this 3-D shooter gets very repetitive. It's especially so when you're constantly forced to restart at checkpoints due to some particularly annoying enemies. **—JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

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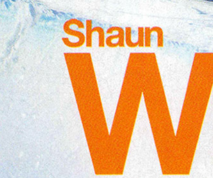
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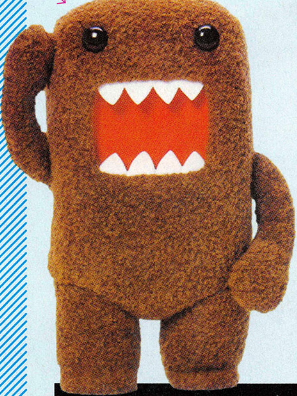
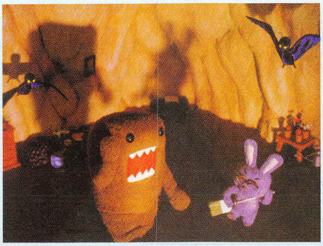
Who Is Domo?

The lovable Japanese mascot comes to the US.

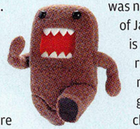




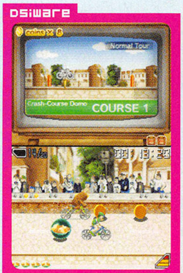
He's brown, he's boxy, he's fuzzy, and he's simultaneously scary and cute. He's Domo, and as you can tell by the reviews on this page, he's the star of a quintet of recently released DSiWare games published by Nintendo. And though he has been seen decorating such establishments as Target and 7-Eleven, you might be asking yourself, "Who is this Domo chap, anyway?" If so, we don't blame you. Although Domo is well known in his home country of Japan, he has only recently made a splash in the US.

Domo started his life as the mascot for NHK, Japan's public broadcast television organization. Along with his friends, including Mr. Usaji (a rabbit) and Tashanna (a weasel), he starred in several stop-motion animated sketches to promote the TV station. Domo's popularity grew quickly, and like Hello Kitty and Pikachu before him, Domo was just too darn adorable to remain in Japan. Now, more and more Domo merchandise is springing up in the States, ranging from plushies to T-shirts to manga to DVDs to—obviously—video games.

Domo's DSiWare titles are enhanced versions of minigames that were previously featured in the Game Boy Advance game Domo-kun's Mysterious TV, which was never released outside of Japan (the honorific -kun is used in Japan when referring to a young male). It's nice that US gamers finally have a chance to take control of Domo. Even if this is your first exposure to the large-mouthed critter, it surely won't be your last. We're bound to see more of Domo in the future. **—PHIL T.**



DSiWare



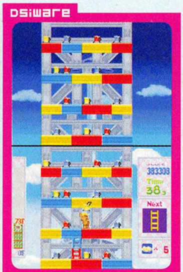
CRASH-COURSE DOMO

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **RACING**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

If you removed all the sweet jumps from Nintendo's Excitebike, you'd have Crash-Course Domo. It's a fun diversion, but the simple gameplay and limited number of tracks quickly grow tiresome. **—PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWare



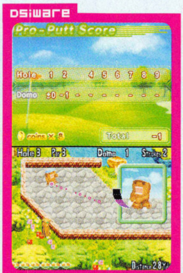
HARD-HAT DOMO

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ACTION/PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

The color-matching mechanic here seems like it would make for a decent puzzle game, but the final product feels half-formed. Victory often depends on luck more than skill, and you're far too often forced to endure a penalty in order to proceed. It's not terrible, but it needs polish. **—PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWare



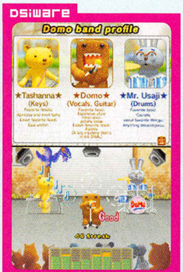
PRO-PUTT DOMO

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

With 18 holes to play, Pro-Putt Domo is a solid mini golf game, especially considering its low price. The controls work well, and the hole design is basic yet enjoyable. Collectible coins scattered on the courses add to the challenge as you aim for the best score. **—PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWare



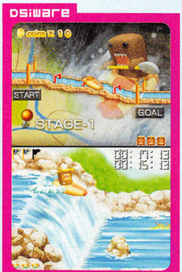
ROCK-N-ROLL DOMO

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **RHYTHM**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Rock-n-Roll Domo is easily my favorite of the Domo games. The mechanics are simple—the game involves little more than tapping the screen or pressing the A Button to the music—but the 8-bit-style tunes are rockin'. It's certainly worth 200 points. **—CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSiWare

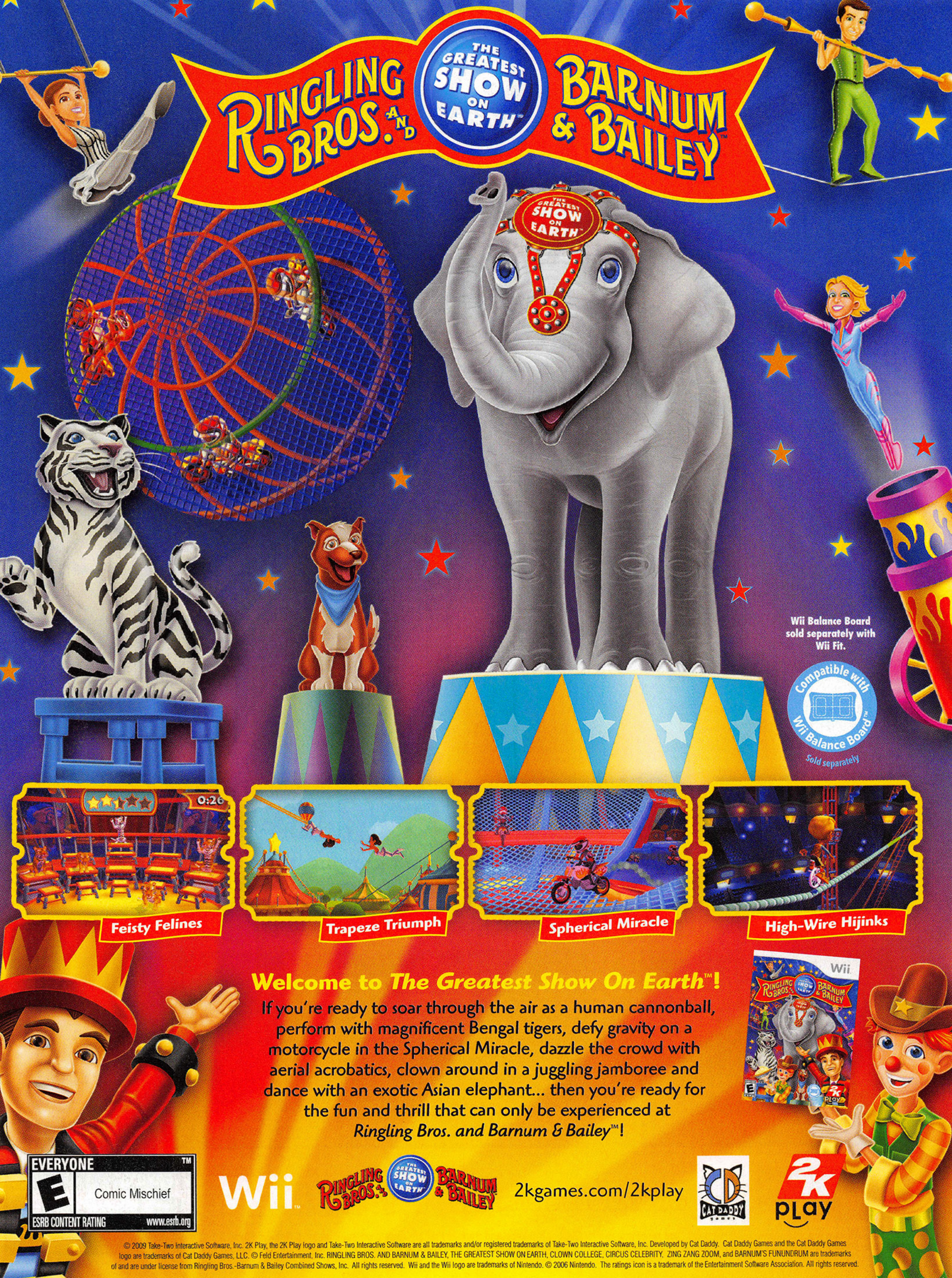


WHITE-WATER DOMO

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **RACING**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

White-Water Domo is essentially a racing game, but your opponents don't appear on the courses with you. As a result, it's pretty hard to gauge your performance, and it feels arbitrary whether you win or lose. **—CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble


RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY
THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH
Wii Balance Board sold separately with Wii Fit.
Compatible with Wii Balance Board
Sold separately
Feisty Felines
Trapeze Triumph
Spherical Miracle
High-Wire Hijinks
EVERYONE
E
Comic Mischief
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org
Wii
CAT DADDY games
2K PLAY

Welcome to *The Greatest Show On Earth*™!

If you're ready to soar through the air as a human cannonball, perform with magnificent Bengal tigers, defy gravity on a motorcycle in the Spherical Miracle, dazzle the crowd with aerial acrobatics, clown around in a juggling jamboree and dance with an exotic Asian elephant… then you're ready for the fun and thrill that can only be experienced at *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey*™!

2kgames.com/2kplay

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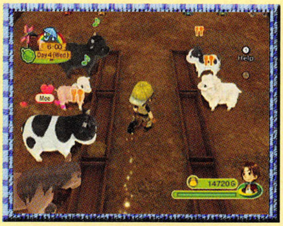
HARVEST MOON®

ANIMAL PARADE

Come Join the Parade!

There's trouble in Harmonica Town! Crops aren't growing, the wind isn't blowing, and the five elemental bells are missing. Only the power of the Harvest King can revive the land, but he's nowhere to be found. Can you find the five bells, awaken the Harvest King, and save the town?



7:00
Day7(Sat)
Help
Pick up
Good Turnip
15559G

Cain

I'm Cain. I'm the owner of Horn Ranch. Nice to meet you.♫

NATSUME®
Serious Fun®

www.natsume.com

Wii™

EVERYONE
E
Alcohol Reference
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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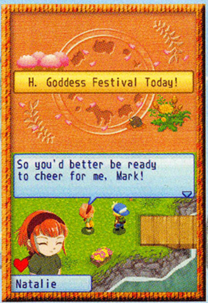
HARVEST MOON® DS
Sunshine Islands

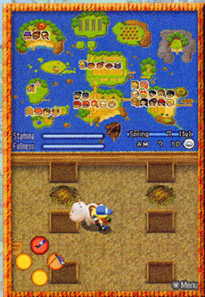
Save the Sunshine Islands!

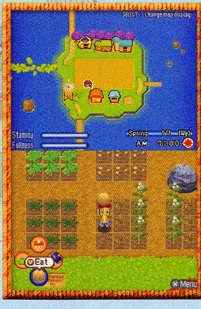
The islands are in peril! Years ago, many islands in the Sunshine Islands chain sank when a powerful earthquake struck. In Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands, it's up to you to raise the sunken islands by finding the magical Sun Stones. With a little luck, you may even find true love and start a family along the way.

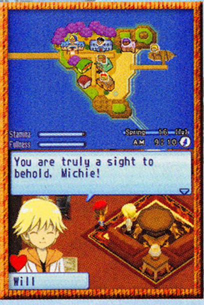

H. Goddess Festival Today!

So you'd better be ready to cheer for me, Mark!

Natalie


Stamina
Fullness
Spring 7 (Su)
AM 7:10
Menu


SELECT : Change map display
Stamina
Fullness
Spring 17 (We)
AM 7:00
Eat
Menu


Stamina
Fullness
Spring 16 (Tu)
AM 9:10

You are truly a sight to behold, Michie!

Will

EVERYONE
E
Comic Mischief
Use of Alcohol
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO DS™

www.natsume.com

NATSUME®
Serious Fun®

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THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

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DATA EAST ARCADE CLASSICS PG. 44
FOTO FIGHTER PG. 43
ROOMS: THE MAIN BUILDING PG. 44
THE SKY CRAWLERS: INNOCENT ACES PG. 45
TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS PG. 40

Fighting with the Stars

> TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS

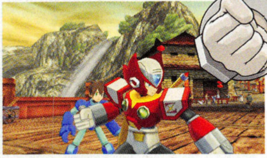
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **EIGHTING** • RELEASE: **JANUARY 2010**

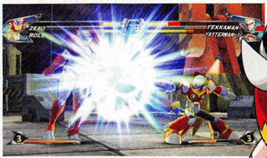
If it seems like we've been doing a lot of coverage of Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars lately, it's because we have—and with good reason, as this two-on-two fighting game is easily one of most anticipated titles of next year. With its easy-to-pick-up-and-play control scheme and its eclectic roster of characters from Capcom video games (Ryu, Mega Man, Viewtiful Joe) and Tatsunoko anime (Ken the Eagle, Casshan, Tekkaman), there's a lot to be excited about. Even better is the fact that the North American version has significant enhancements over the Japanese original (which was released last year), such as improved character balancing, new Wi-Fi modes, and a handful of new challengers, including Capcom's Frank West from Dead Rising and Zero from the Mega Man X franchise, as well as Tatsunoko's Joe the Condor from the *Gatchaman* series.

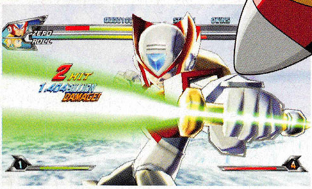
On the surface, zombie-slaying, war-covering photojournalist Frank West seems to be an odd addition—he's just a regular guy who beats up his opponents with baseball bats, golf clubs, and shopping carts. OK, so he can summon zombies to help out (but be careful, as zombies will attack the nearest player, including Frank himself), too, and he has a couple of pro-wrestling maneuvers at his disposal. It's hilarious to see Frank grab the legs of a ginormous character such as Gold Lightan and spin the robot around with ease.

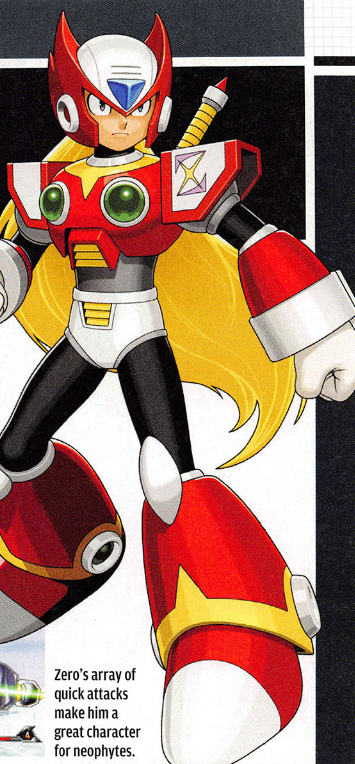
Speaking of robots, Zero is one of our favorite new combatants; aside from our affection for the Mega Man franchise, Zero is a fast-and-furious fighter with a variety of abilities. For instance, he can unleash a barrage of projectiles from his Z-buster arm cannon, then dash toward his opponent and perform a dragon-punch-like upward slash with his sword.

Joe the Condor's melee attacks are slower than Zero's, and using his gun requires more precision. But don't think that makes Joe a worse character; Joe also has a handy and stylish counterattack in his arsenal. After he turns his back to his adversary and is struck, both characters become black silhouettes on a red background as Joe strikes back. —**JUSTIN C.**

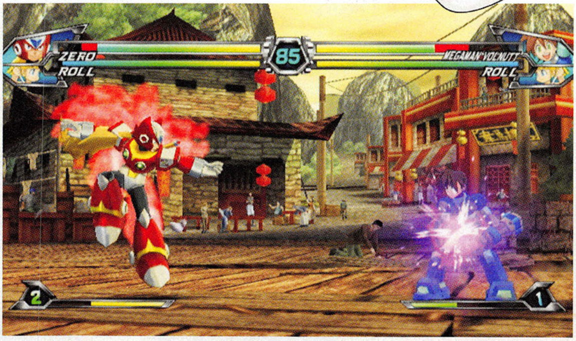


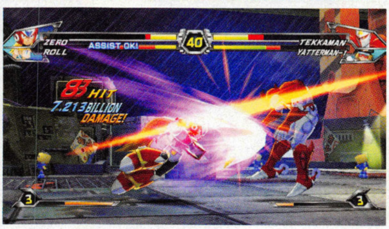


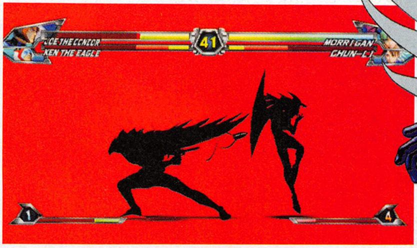




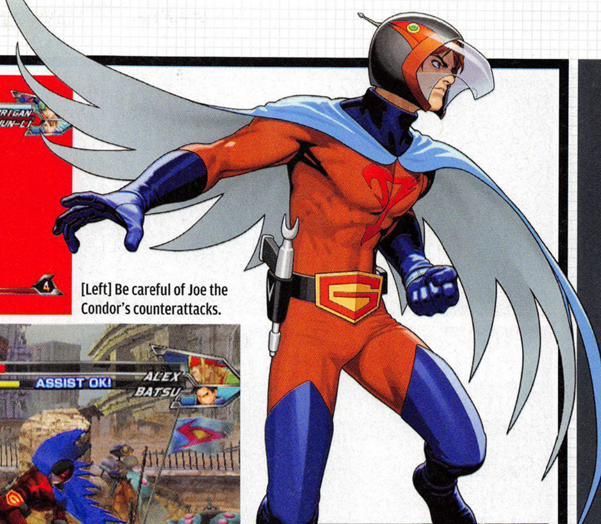
Zero's array of quick attacks make him a great character for neophytes.

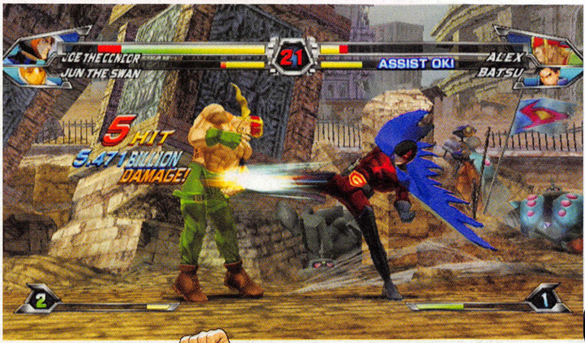


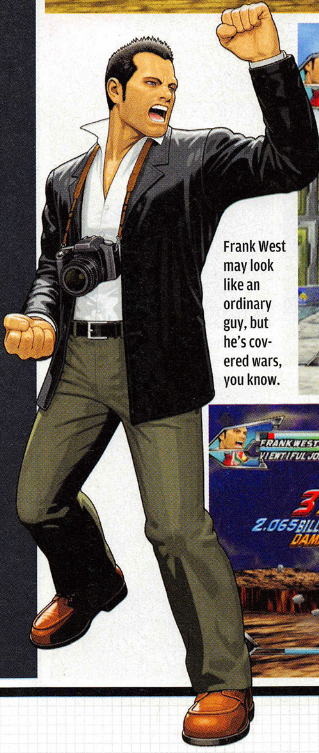



JOE THE CONDOR
KEN THE EAGLE
41
MORRIGAN
CHUN-LI
1
4

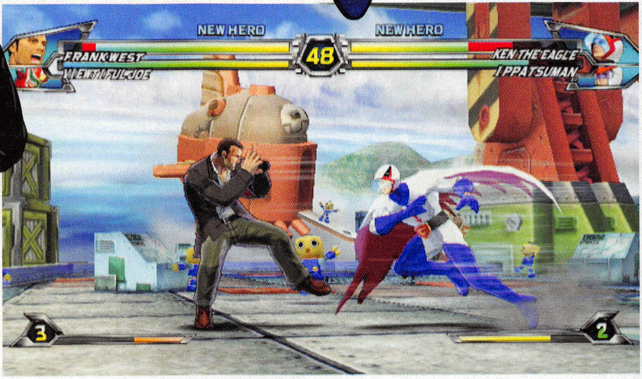
[Left] Be careful of Joe the Condor's counterattacks.

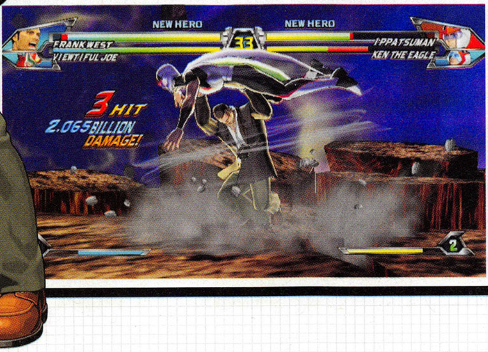


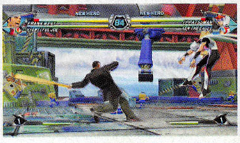

JOE THE CONDOR
JUN THE SWAN
21
ALEX
BATSU
ASSIST OK!
5 HIT
5.471 BILLION DAMAGE!
2
1

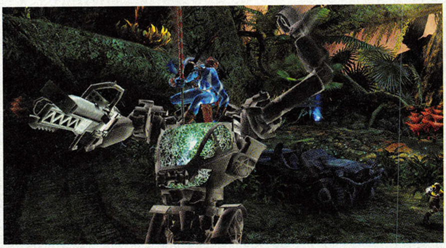


Frank West may look like an ordinary guy, but he's covered wars, you know.


NEW HERO
NEW HERO
FRANK WEST
VIEWTIFUL JOE
48
KEN THE EAGLE
IPPATSUMAN
3
2


NEW HERO
NEW HERO
FRANK WEST
VIEWTIFUL JOE
33
IPPATSUMAN
KEN THE EAGLE
3 HIT
2.065 BILLION DAMAGE!
2





PREVIEW HOLIDAY '09

Nature's Wrath

> AVATAR: THE GAME

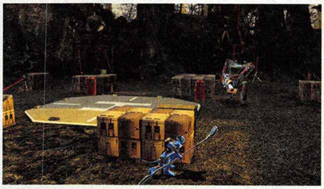
PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTREAL**
RELEASE: **DECEMBER 2009**

The Na'vi are a race of creatures at harmony with nature; they are one with the trees, flowers, and animals, living a life of peace. At least, they were at peace until the humans invaded the lush Na'vi world of Pandora in an attempt to find a precious metal called Unobtanium. In this prequel to the *Avatar* feature film, you play the part of Ryuk, a Na'vi warrior whose village was destroyed by the humans, and you're not going to let anything stop you from exacting vengeance.

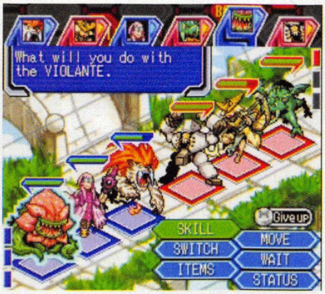
The humans have the technological advantage, but the Na'vi have nature on their side. By hiding in the foliage or stalking from the treetops, you can sneak up on your adversaries and dispose of them with quick, motion-based staff attacks, or you can stop enemies from afar with your bow. Avatar is a very methodical game; much like Metal Gear Solid, it's all about understanding your surroundings, waiting for an opportunity, and striking when the enemy is vulnerable. Facing foes head-on is usually not a good idea.

However, the game doesn't rely entirely on stealth; there's plenty of platforming to go around (navigating a series of floating islands connected by ziplines is especially cool), and once you obtain a skill called Way of the Hunter, you'll be able to enter a temporary fury state that makes your melee attacks much more effective. Additionally, after you rescue a winged beast called a Banshee you'll be able to take to the skies and shoot down enemy aircraft by aiming with the Wii Remote controller while guiding the creature via either Nunchuk motions or the Wii Balance Board accessory.

As you progress further into the game, you'll get to engage in more-varied activities (such as raiding a refinery, escorting a huge creature called a Hammerhead, and battling powerful human-controlled armored suits), but you'll also be drawn further into human settlements and away from nature, forcing you to improvise tactics. Luckily, a second player can join in at any time to take control of Ryuk's sister Kyuna so you can protect Pandora together. —**CHRIS H.**



[Above] Reach out and touch someone! And then slam him to the ground.



What will you do with the VIOLANTE.

Show Your True Colors

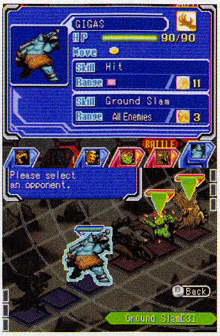
>FOTO FIGHTER

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DSi** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **ALPHA UNIT** • RELEASE: **JANUARY 2010**

Monster-battling games have started with stranger ideas, but Konami's Foto Fighter (working title) is still a ways out there. Monster Rancher used CDs, Magic Pengel used random scribbles, and now we have an adventure driven by the Nintendo DSi Camera.

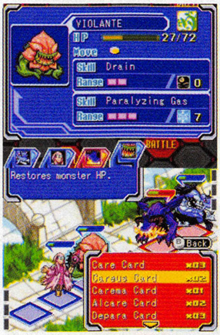
Adding a monster to your stable is as simple as snapping a digital picture. The spawning algorithm looks at the left and right halves of the image and determines which one of eight shades is the dominant color on either side. Cross-referencing those two colors creates a number out of the algorithm, and with it one of 120-some different beasts.

Besides the basic breeding and battling, Foto Fighter has a touch of dungeon-crawling RPG to it. You can guide your crew of up to six monsters through more than 100 floors of challenges, gearing them up with special equipment and weapons to boost their chances of survival. The real fun may lie in cracking open the black box of the monster-spawning formula, though—we look forward to testing it with some very weird pictures this winter.
—DAVID S.



GIGAS
HP 90/90
Move
Skill Hit
Range 11
Skill Ground Slam
Range All Enemies 3

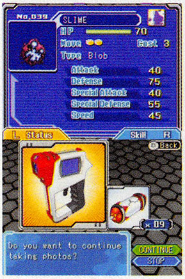
Please select an opponent.



VIOLANTE
HP 27/72
Move
Skill Drain
Range 0
Skill Paralyzing Gas
Range 7

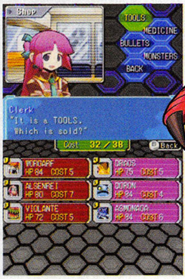
Restores monster HP.

Care Card ×03
Caraus Card ×02
Carema Card ×01
Alcare Card ×02
Depara Card ×03



No.039 SLIME
HP 70
Move Cost 3
Type Blob
Attack 40
Defense 75
Special Attack 40
Special Defense 55
Speed 45

Do you want to continue taking photos?



Clerk
"It is a TOOLS.
Which is sold?"
Cost 32 / 38

MORGARF HP 84 COST 5
DRAOS HP 75 COST 5
ALGENREI HP 80 COST 7
DORON HP 84 COST 4
VIOLANTE HP 72 COST 5
ASMONAGA HP 84 COST 6

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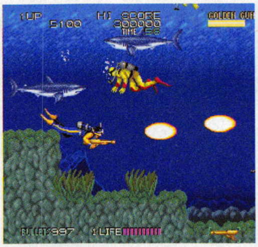
Backup Data

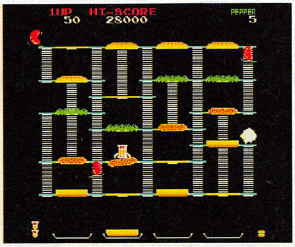
> DATA EAST ARCADE CLASSICS

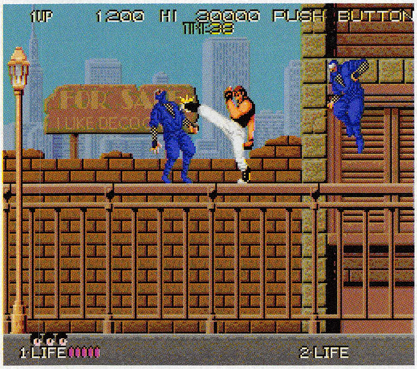
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **G1M2** • RELEASE: **JANUARY 2010**

Are you a bad enough dude to rescue the president? Of course you are. You're also fully prepared for robbing trains in the Old West, hitting the court for some 3-on-3 basketball, saving the world as a secret agent, and, um, making delicious hamburgers while being chased by killer red peppers. Though the name Data East might not mean much to anyone who started playing video games in the last decade or so, the company was responsible for a good number of quarter-munching hits in the 1980s and '90s, and Data East Arcade Classics collects 15 of them in one convenient package for less than $20. The compilation covers a broad spectrum of titles, from true classics like side-scrolling brawler Bad Dudes and food-themed action game Burger Time to more-obscure yet still cool games like prehistoric action romp Caveman Ninja (familiar to Super NES players as Joe & Mac), isometric fantasy adventure Wizard Fire, and post-apocalyptic beat-'em-up Crude Buster (also known as Two Crude). Numerous goodies, such as old marquees and flyers, are included as unlockable bonus content. —**CHRIS H.**

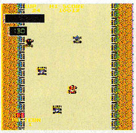
PRE VIEW
HOLIDAY '09

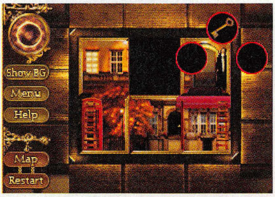

1UP
5100
HI SCORE
300000
TIME / 58
GOLDEN GUN
BULLET 997
1 LIFE

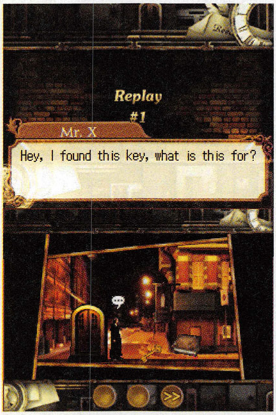

1UP HI-SCORE
50 28000
PEPPER
5


1UP 1200 HI 30000 PUSH BUTTON
TIME 38
FOR SA
I LIKE DEGOO
1·LIFE
2·LIFE

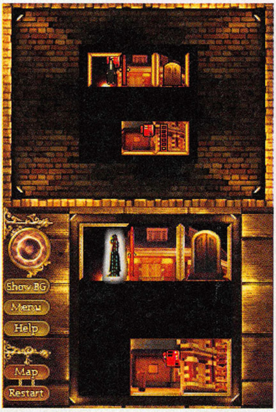
[Left] Not only are the Bad Dudes bad enough to take on an army of ninjas, but they're bad enough to kill said ninjas with a single kick.

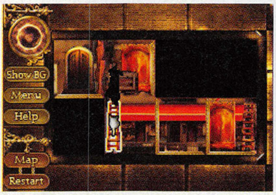



Show BG
Menu
Help
Map
Restart

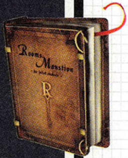

Replay
#1
Mr. X

Hey, I found this key, what is this for?


Show BG
Menu
Help
Map
Restart


Show BG
Menu
Help
Map
Restart

Radical Remodeling


Rooms Mansion
R

> ROOMS: THE MAIN BUILDING

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS (ALSO ON Wii)**
PUBLISHER: **HUDSON** • DEVELOPER: **NATSUME/HANDMADE GAME** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2010**

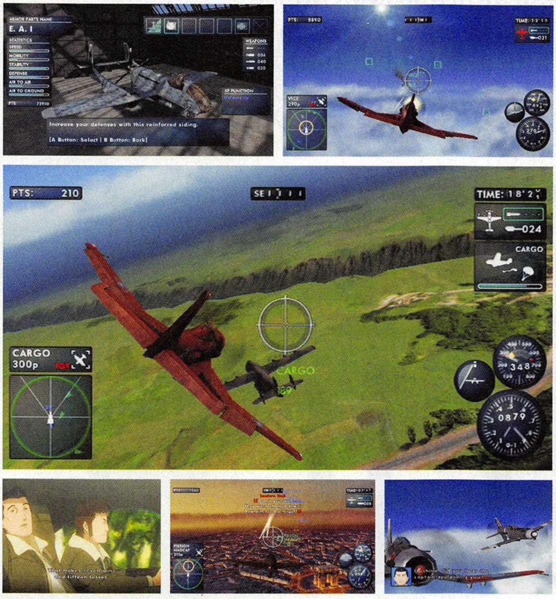
Part adventure game, part sliding-tile puzzle, Rooms: The Main Building is a surreal brainbender unlike any other. At its most basic level, it's about moving a set of rooms around a grid to allow your character—a trenchcoat-wearing guy by the name of Mr. X—to get from the starting point to the exit. But there's way more to it than that. In addition to having impenetrable walls that make it tricky to get from room to room, each chamber may contain a number of interactive objects: ladders, keys, explosives for destroying wooden barriers, magic wardrobes that swap the positions of rooms, clocks that rotate rooms, and telephones that teleport you (after turning you into *Matrix*-style green data) to another room. Simply getting to the exit isn't enough; to truly succeed in each stage, you'll have to get all the rooms into the correct position so you can reconstruct the mansions in which the game takes place. —**CHRIS H.**

In-Flight Entertainment

> THE SKY CRAWLERS: INNOCENT ACES

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **PROJECT ACES** • RELEASE: **Q1 2010**

Though developed by the same folks responsible for the acclaimed Ace Combat series, The Sky Crawlers offers a different take on arcade-style dogfights. The biggest difference: it puts you in the cockpit of a World War II-style aircraft rather than a high-tech jet. That means no more locking onto bogies from afar with long-range missiles, but you can still get a bead on them using the game's Tactical Maneuver Command (TMC) system. Keeping an enemy in your sights at close range fills the TMC gauge, which lets you trigger some truly impressive maneuvers to swiftly position your plane behind the target. This fancy flying lends combat a cinematic flare, and the more TMCs you pull off, the more points you'll earn to unlock upgrades, new weapons, and even additional craft. One thing the game does have in common with Ace Combat is an emphasis on storytelling, with lots of fully dubbed anime cut-scenes. **—STEVE T.**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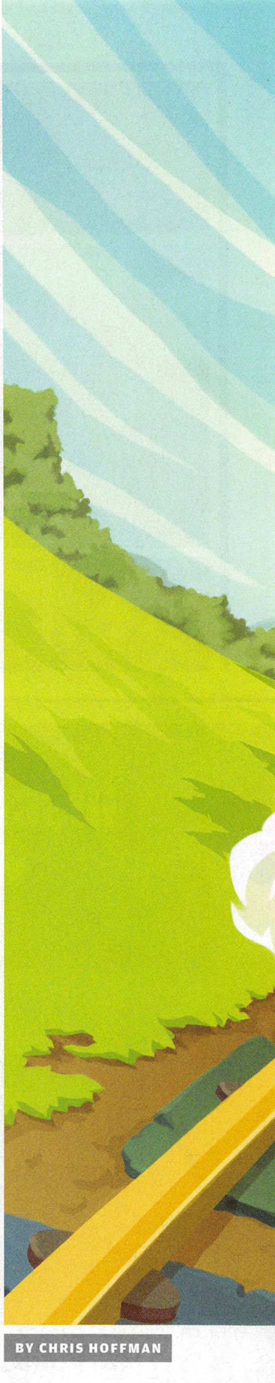
Link is back for another epic quest, and this time Princess Zelda is joining him! Take a detailed, hands-on look at The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks for Nintendo DS.

Team Spirit



BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

THROUGHOUT NINTENDO'S renowned The Legend of Zelda franchise, there have been many heroes named Link embarking on adventures to save their respective lands from evil. Each has been aided by numerous weapons and items, and many are assisted by companion characters, from a sentient hat to a talking boat to an imp from a shadow world. In The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, however, Link is aided by none other than the titular Princess Zelda herself. For once, Zelda will be an integral part of her own legend, and the resultant fantasy quest is, in many ways, unlike anything you've previously seen in the series.

From the get-go, you'll realize that Spirit Tracks isn't your typical Zelda adventure, and that this incarnation of Link isn't your typical swashbuckling hero. As the game begins, Link has no aspirations of taking up a sword and fighting evil; instead, he's an apprentice train engineer, learning under the tutelage of Alfonzo (a master engineer and former royal guardsman) to travel the network of train tracks (the Spirit Tracks) that crisscross the land. Link doesn't even wear his good ol' green tunic; instead he wears a black engineer's outfit. Regardless, it just so happens that the story kicks off on a very special occasion for Link: it's the day he travels to Hyrule Castle to be promoted to a Royal Engineer.

Once you set foot in Castle Town, you'll have a chance to get acclimated to the game's controls. Anyone who's played the previous Zelda game for the Nintendo DS handheld, The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass, will recognize the interface almost immediately. Nearly everything is touch-screen-controlled; you move by dragging the stylus along the system's lower screen, interact with people or objects by tapping on them, and execute a quick, evasive roll

PLATFORM **NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER **NINTENDO** | RELEASE **DECEMBER 2009** by double-tapping the screen (a change from Phantom Hourglass, in which you had to make small circles at the edge of the screen). Though you won't have any weapons early in the journey, you'll eventually be able to attack enemies by tapping on them, make a broad swinging attack by slashing across the screen, and pull off Link's trademark spinning maneuver by drawing a circle around your hero.

It Takes Two

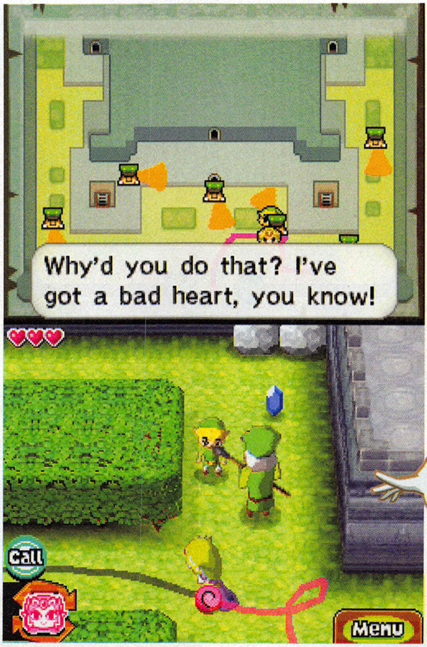
In Castle Town you'll encounter a few castle guards—wearing outfits that look a lot like Link's typical garb—who scoff at your youth and refuse to believe you're a Royal Engineer candidate. Despite the fact that Princess Zelda is expecting Link, the soldiers are about to send him packing when a strange, mustachioed man intervenes. Dressed in green and wearing two bowler hats, the man—who turns out to be Chancellor Cole, one of Hyrule's top officials—looks like some sort of bizarrely out-of-place leprechaun. Even though he appears to help Link, his sinister grin and creepily pointy teeth suggest that he's not exactly a normal guy.

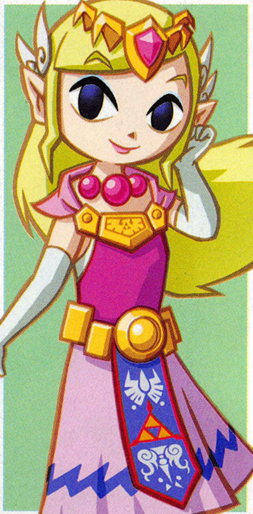
Princess Zelda, at least, realizes that something is amiss. When Link meets the princess—he gasps when he first sees her, stunned by her radiance—she presents him with his Royal Engineer's certificate, and secretly passes him a note that warns him of the chancellor and invites him to a private rendezvous. The note reveals the route that lets you bypass the guards and reach Zelda's personal chambers; as in Phantom Hourglass, you can call up your own map and jot down notes or mark points of interest via the touch screen.

When you reach Zelda's quarters you'll find her playing a pan flute, but there's no time for a jam session. According to Zelda, the Tower of Spirits—which is connected to the network of Spirit Tracks—has protected the kingdom for ages, but something seems to be going wrong. The Spirit Tracks are disappearing from Hyrule, leading her to believe that bad things are afoot at the tower. Since Chancellor Cole has refused to investigate, Zelda requests Link's help to travel to the tower and visit the "wise one" said to reside there.

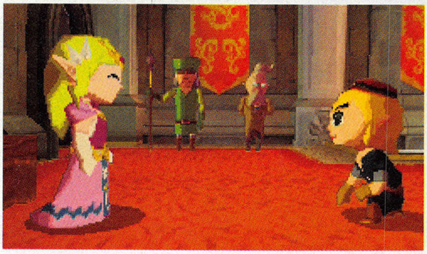
Reaching the tower is a simple matter since Link and Alfonzo have their own train, but getting to the vehicle—which is located at the edge of Castle Town—is another matter entirely since Zelda doesn't want to be seen leaving the castle. Luckily, the princess has a plan: she gives Link a familiar green guard's uniform (you didn't think he was gonna wear that conductor's getup for long, did you?) and asks him to distract the guards while she heads for the train station.

The stealthy escape from the castle gives you your first





[Above] Zelda will follow whatever path you draw for her with the stylus.

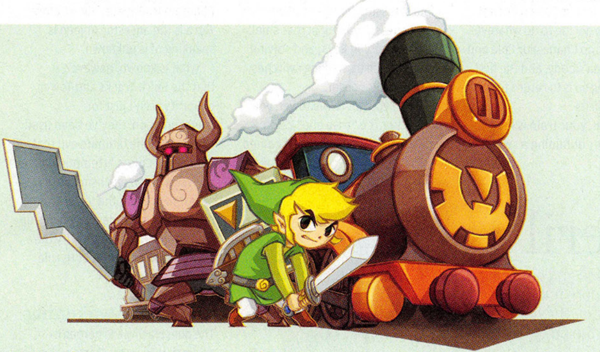


It's me! It's Zelda!

chance to experience the game's dual-character gameplay—and to control Princess Zelda. You'll guide Link as usual, by dragging the stylus on the touch screen; Zelda will follow unless you tell her to stay put by tapping an onscreen icon. You can then tap another icon to instruct her to catch up with Link when the coast is clear. Alternatively, you can tap an icon of Zelda's face, which allows you to control the princess with much more accuracy: simply tap Zelda, then draw the path you want her to follow. To help Zelda escape, you'll have to turn the guards' attention away from Zelda's path (their fields of sight are shown on your map), either by talking to them or resorting to less-subtle methods (such as throwing rocks). You'll alternate control between Link and Zelda as you guide the princess from one hiding spot to the next, and before long you'll make your way back to Alfonzo and the train. Next stop: the Tower of Spirits.

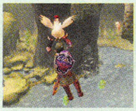
Souled Out

The tower isn't far away, but the heroes don't even get there before things go awry. The tracks disappear right out from underneath the train, sending the vehicle careening across the landscape. Ominous purple clouds swirl overhead, and the Tower of Spirits, just out of reach, explodes into large segments that hover in the air. Even worse, an evil train—actually, an evil *flying* train—appears from out of nowhere,



Ride in Style

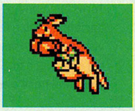
The Spirit Train in The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks is a pretty sweet ride, as well as an important part of the adventure, but it's certainly not the only method of transportation featured in a Zelda game. Take a look at some of the means of locomotion Link has used in his past adventures.



CUCKOO

While certainly not the most elegant means of transportation, sometimes a wandering Cuckoo is just the thing to help with a safe descent. More useful but no less embarrassing is the magically resurrected flying rooster in The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening.

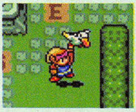
COOLNESS RATING:
♥♡♡♡♡



KANGAROO POUCH

In the Oracle of Ages and Oracle of Seasons games, Link could enlist the help of three animal friends: Ricky the kangaroo, Moosh the flying bear, and Dimitri the Dodongo. They're all helpful in their own way, but seriously, what kind of world-saving hero hangs out in a kangaroo's pouch?

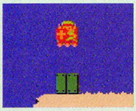
COOLNESS RATING:
♥♡♡♡♡



BIRD

If you play your flute in front of Kakariko Village's weathervane in A Link to the Past, a bird comes to life and bursts out of the construct. From that point on, any time you play the flute, the bird will swoop down, grab you, and transport you to select points throughout Hyrule.

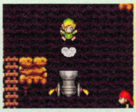
COOLNESS RATING:
♥♥♡♡♡



RAFT

In Link's early adventures, all he had to rely on for transportation was a few logs held together by rope. That was it. Rugged and useful, yes, but not exactly fancy.

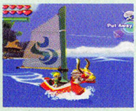
COOLNESS RATING:
♥♥♡♡♡



CANNON

A cannon, most likely, would be a pretty lousy way to travel. It's probably not very accurate and it would likely sting a little. But c'mon—no one's gonna doubt you're a mighty hero when you tell them you travel by cannon.

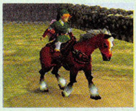
COOLNESS RATING:
♥♥♥♡♡



SAILBOAT

The vast oceans of The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker received mixed responses from gamers, but a sailboat is a big improvement over some of Link's past rides; you can even equip it with a cannon and a salvage hook. And it's not just any sailboat: it's a talking sailboat that's a conduit for the king of Hyrule.

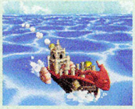
COOLNESS RATING:
♥♥♥♥♡



HORSE

There's nothing quite like racing through Hyrule on horseback. Not only is Epona a steadfast ally and a trusted companion, but she also enables you to cross Hyrule's vast wilderness in a fraction of the time it takes on foot. It's hard to imagine Ocarina of Time or Twilight Princess without her.

COOLNESS RATING:
♥♥♥♥♥



STEAM SHIP

Finally, in Phantom Hourglass you obtain a vessel worthy of a hero on a quest to save the world from evil! Not only is a steam ship a huge step up from a sailboat or a raft, but it's fully customizable and upgradeable. It even comes complete with a driver. Admittedly, he's a flake, but you can't have everything, eh?

COOLNESS RATING:
♥♥♥♥♥

carrying Chancellor Cole and one of his lackeys. Cole quickly reveals his true, evil nature—it turns out those hats were concealing a pair of horns jutting out of his head. (Zelda really needs to rethink her hiring policy.)

Alfonzo, once considered the greatest swordsman in the land, is summarily defeated, and Cole proceeds to work some crazy mojo on Princess Zelda. He zaps Zelda's soul right out of her body, then makes off with her lifeless form. Turns out a body descended from ancient Hyrulian lineage is the only vessel that can house the power of some big, bad, super-duper evil. (And no, it's apparently not Ganon.) Go figure.

The next thing Link knows, he finds himself back in Hyrule Castle, recovering in bed. Strangely enough, Zelda is there, too—at least, her soul is. Throughout the series, Link and Zelda have always shared a special connection, and that's made especially clear in Spirit Tracks: Link is the only one in the castle that can see Zelda in her ghostly spirit form. Down but not out, the two decide to do whatever it takes to stop Chancellor Cole and reclaim Zelda's body, and the first step in doing so is to return to the Tower of Spirits.

Of course, your train is history, so after obtaining a sword (finally!) from the captain of the guards, Link heads off on foot, with an intangible Zelda as his guide and traveling companion. A long-forgotten secret passage leads to the tower; here you'll engage in the kinds of tried-and-true activities that have made the Zelda series such a hit—slaying slimes and bats, pushing blocks on top of pressure plates to open doors, tossing bombs to blast open caves, hopping across small gaps, obtaining keys, and solving puzzles such as striking switches in the correct order.

When you get to the tower, you encounter the "wise one" Zelda spoke of—an elderly woman named Anjean. She's one of the Lokomo people—evidenced by the fact that she tends to scoot around on a Hyrulian version of a Segway—and she claims to have known Zelda's ancestors. Spirit Tracks is set approximately 100 years after Phantom Hourglass, and the land that Spirit Tracks takes place in is the very same Hyrule discovered by Link and Tetra at the end of Phantom Hourglass, but whether Tetra is the ancestor Anjean is speaking of is unknown.

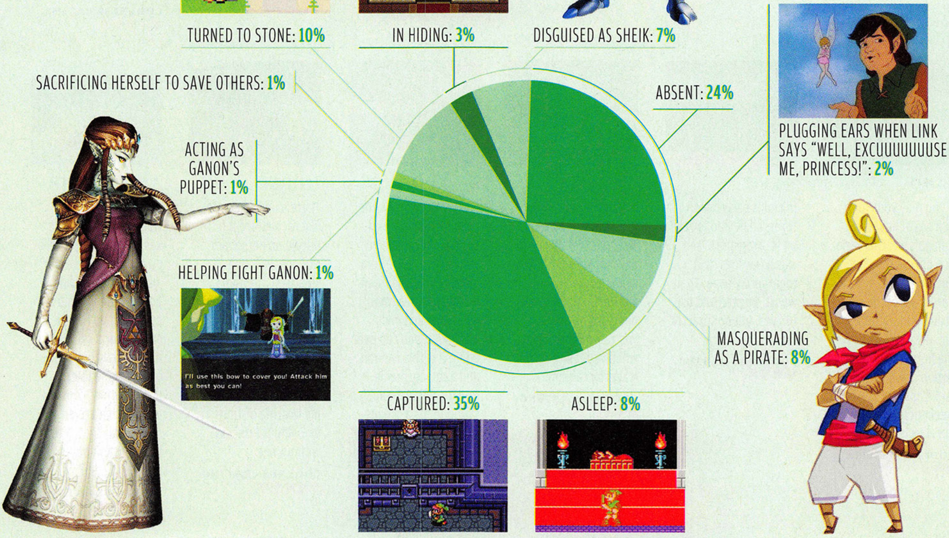
What is known, however, is that the Spirit Tracks and Tower of Spirits aren't just for transportation; they've been used to imprison the ultimate evil that Chancellor Cole is attempting to revive. With Anjean using all of her power to prevent the tower from being completely destroyed, it's up to Link and Zelda to refortify the Spirit Tracks and protect Hyrule from darkness.

Spiritual Awakening

The quest facing the heroes is no small task, but it starts with a single step—actually, a few steps, which lead to the first section of the Tower of Spirits. The tower acts

Princess in Peril

Thanks to her role as Link's traveling companion and her ability to possess Phantoms, Princess Zelda plays a much more prominent part than ever before in The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks. The following chart will give you an idea of how she's kept busy in the previous Zelda titles.


TURNED TO STONE: 10%
IN HIDING: 3%
DISGUISED AS SHEIK: 7%
SACRIFICING HERSELF TO SAVE OTHERS: 1%
ABSENT: 24%
PLUGGING EARS WHEN LINK SAYS "WELL, EXCUUUUUUUSE ME, PRINCESS!": 2%
ACTING AS GANON'S PUPPET: 1%
HELPING FIGHT GANON: 1%
MASQUERADING AS A PIRATE: 8%
CAPTURED: 35%
ASLEEP: 8%

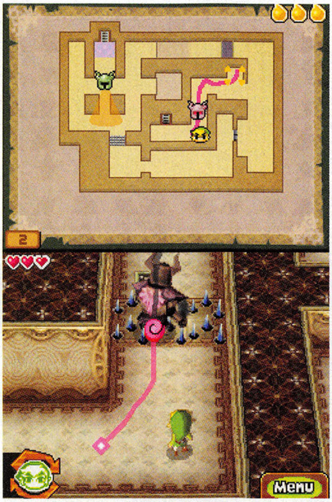
I'll use this bow to cover you! Attack him as best you can!

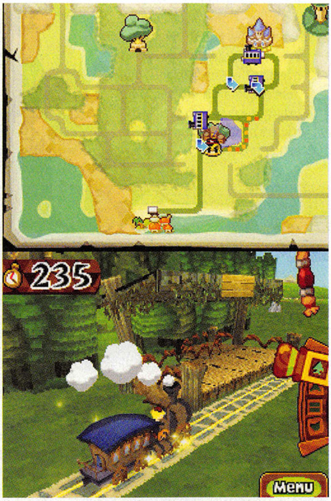
as the game's central hub, and similar to the Temple of the Ocean King in Phantom Hourglass, it's a place that you'll return to many times throughout your adventure. Fortunately, the developers seem to have listened to players' criticisms about Phantom Hourglass, so you won't have to replay previous sections each time you return (although you will be able to return to previous sections to access secrets you may have missed). Instead, the tower is divided into distinct areas, each of which contains a magical map that allows you to reach new parts of Hyrule.

When Link and the spirit of Zelda enter the first section, however, they get a startling surprise. The Phantom guardians, who are supposed to protect the tower from evil, have gone haywire and are attacking anyone, good or bad, who sets foot in their domain. If you played Phantom Hourglass, you'll recall that these hulking, knightlike foes can cause a lot of trouble, especially since they're impervious to regular attacks. The only way to harm them is to collect three Tears of Light scattered about the area, then strike the Phantom from behind. Until you do, you'll have to avoid the Phantoms by hiding in safe zones that protect you from their gaze.

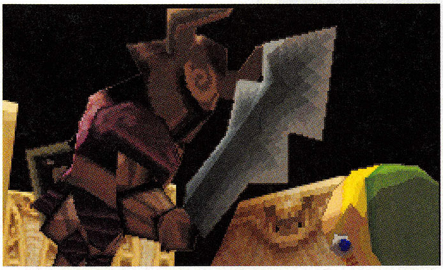
As Link and Zelda accidentally discover, however, striking a Phantom doesn't defeat it. Instead, doing so allows Zelda to possess the imposing foe. This is where Spirit Tracks really starts to hit its unique stride, as you control Link and Zelda (in Phantom form) in tandem to explore the tower. Just like when Link and Zelda were escaping Hyrule Castle, you'll be able to control Link directly and draw paths for Zelda to follow, but as a Phantom, Zelda has far more abilities than before. Her armored form is essentially invulnerable, allowing her to walk over spikes and through lava, and thus reach areas that Link cannot; sometimes she'll even give Link a lift. Zelda can also interact with switches and smite foes (she'll automatically dispatch any enemy in her path), and she can distract other Phantoms, allowing Link to sneak past. As the game advances, she'll even be able to transfer her spirit from one Phantom to another. Zelda does have her weaknesses, though: she's terrified of mice, which means at times Link will have to perform some pest control before the duo can proceed.

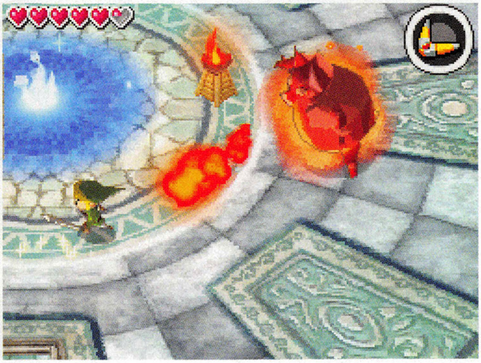
By working together and obtaining the first map, Link and Zelda will restore some of the Spirit Tracks and be able to reach new areas. Obtaining the map also gives them access to the Spirit Train that resides at the bottom of the tower. Similar to how the various islands of Phantom Hourglass could be reached by boat, the different regions in Spirit Tracks are accessible by train travel. Unlike in Phantom Hourglass, you won't be completely free to choose your route (the train must follow the tracks, after all), but you will be able to control your speed, blow your whistle to clear animals out of your path, and blast enemies with a cannon (once you obtain one) by tapping on the screen. But you'll also have to be on the lookout for enemy trains; these foes are virtually unstoppable, so you'll have to watch enemy movements as shown on the upper-screen map, and strategically choose which path to take when the track branches. Needless to say, Link will not fare very well in a head-on collision.





[Above] Zelda is quite formidable as an armored Phantom. Note the Hyrulian Royal Crest on her back.





On the Right Track

Before you can reach you next major destination, the Forest Temple, you'll need help from other Lokomos to restore the Spirit Tracks' lost energy. In traditional Zelda-game fashion, you'll travel to villages and other locations, complete tasks to assist others, and, in return, gain access to new areas. Eventually you'll get to the temple—one of four throughout Hyrule that connect to the Tower of Spirits. Unlike in the tower, there are no Phantoms here, so this part of the adventure is primarily a solo affair. (Zelda's spirit is still with you, though, so she'll periodically pop up to chat or lend advice.)

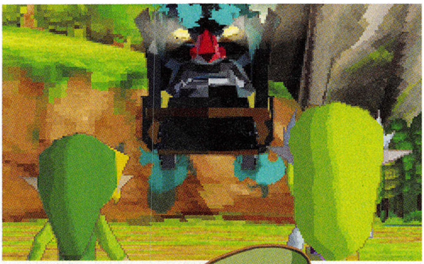
You will, however, acquire special items in each dungeon—an essential ingredient for any Zelda quest. In the Forest Temple, the item you obtain is the Whirlwind (which you may have seen in the trailers released by Nintendo earlier this year). By holding down the L or R Button you'll ready the item, allowing you to aim via the touch screen, then unleash a gust of wind by blowing into the DS microphone. Like most Zelda items, the Whirlwind has multiple uses; it can blow away poisonous clouds (to reveal treasure chests or other goodies), activate windmill-style switches, and even push keys within reach. It's also critical against some enemies; you can blow foes' attacks back at them or knock enemies across gaps where they'll be unable to cause harm.

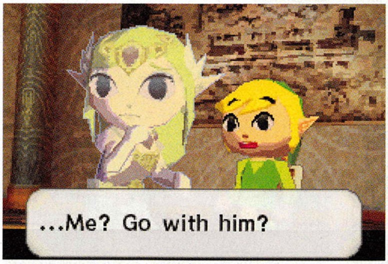
The Whirlwind is merely the first tool you'll acquire; your inventory has room for six such devices, including a boomerang and a whip, which allows you to swing over gaps, Indiana Jones-style. Throughout your journey you'll pick up other items, such as an important musical instrument, as well as odds and ends like wooden hearts and dragon scales, which tie in to side quests.

After solving numerous puzzles and defeating chambers full of enemies in the Forest Temple, you'll find the Master Key that leads to the dungeon boss. Getting the key to the door is trickier than it seems, though. You must carry it along a specific path, otherwise you'll be ambushed by enemies reminiscent of the Wall Masters from earlier Zelda titles. (Your ability to draw on your map comes in handy for noting the safe route.) Behind the boss door is a giant stag beetle, which you'll be able to defeat through quick use of your blade and clever use of the Whirlwind: first you'll blow away poisonous gasses to expose its weak point, then you'll blow bomb-like enemies into the boss when it swoops from above.

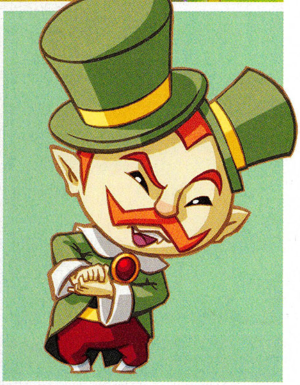
With the boss defeated, you'll partially restore the Tower of Spirits, thus gaining access to another section of the tower, where you'll use any tools you've acquired and again team up with Zelda in Phantom form. That, in turn, will let you obtain another map, unlock more train tracks, and reach another dungeon to continue the cycle. In true Zelda fashion, each item you procure will give you more options to explore the game world and bring you ever closer to stopping Chancellor Cole and retrieving Princess Zelda's body.

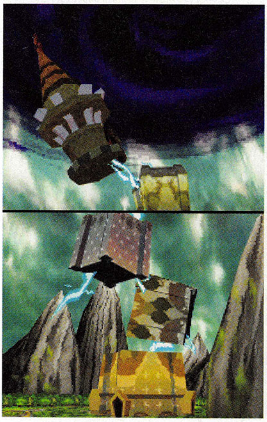
As deep and fulfilling as The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks is up until this point, the adventure has only just begun. The enemies and obstacles that Link and Zelda must overcome promise to get even more challenging as their quest continues, but with three distinct styles of gameplay (solo adventuring as Link, traveling by train, and playing as both Link and Zelda within the Tower of Spirits) and several improvements to the formula established by Phantom Hourglass, Spirit Tracks is poised to deliver the quality fans expect from one of the top franchises in gaming. There's even a multiplayer battle mode. Mark your calendar for the game's December 7 release date, because when Link and Zelda team up, it seems that there's nothing they can't do.



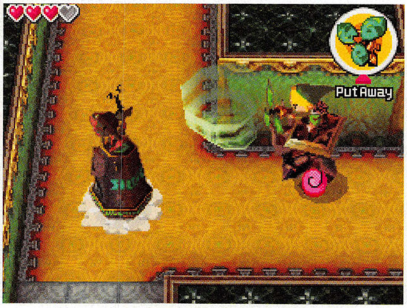


...Me? Go with him?





[Left] The once-powerful Tower of Spirits has definitely seen better days.



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Nintendo DS (Nov. 2004)

CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF NINTENDO DS!

NINTENDO DS
WARNING - HEALTH AND SAFETY
BEFORE PLAYING, READ THE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS BOOKLET FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY.
TO GET AN EXTRA COPY FOR YOUR REGION, GO ONLINE AT www.nintendo.com/healthsafety/
Touch the Touch Screen to continue.
NINTENDO DS

Hail to the King

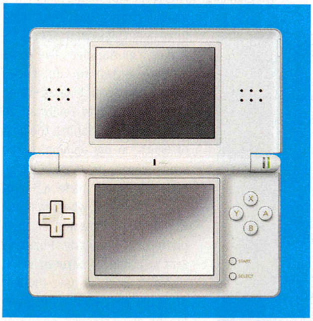
Five years and over 113 million* systems later, Nintendo's history-making handheld continues to revolutionize the way we play.

Remember when the Nintendo DS system was introduced alongside the GameCube and Game Boy Advance as Nintendo's "third pillar," and gamers weren't quite sure what to make of it? Skip forward five years, and now the odd little handheld with two screens has outsold every other current system, retired the legendary Game Boy brand, and redefined video games and the types of people who play them. In honor of all the DS has achieved so far, we take a look at the features, games, and people that helped it rise to power.

BY CHRIS SLATE

*SOURCE: NINTENDO CO., LTD. (AS OF 9/30/09)

Nintendo DS Lite (Jun. 2006)



Behind the Screens

Kenichi Sugino and his design group are responsible for the creation and subsequent evolution of the Nintendo DS, and Mr. Sugino graciously agreed to chat with us about the amazing story behind his historic handheld.

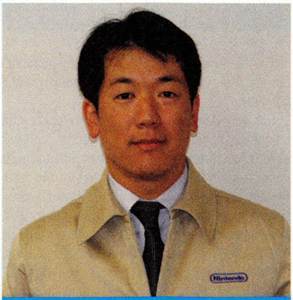
Nintendo DSi (Apr. 2009)

NINTENDO POWER **The original Nintendo DS was radically different from any game system that came before it. What was it like to be involved in its development, and what were your personal goals with the hardware?**

KENICHI SUGINO The goal of the Nintendo DS hardware was to put all players—regardless of their skill level, beginner or expert—at the same starting line. I was truly honored to be a part of this project, but on the other hand, my days were filled with continuous worry and stress. Could we really create such a unique product?

Were you confident that the Nintendo DS would be received well?

In the weeks before the product announcement was made, I was full of anxiety, but at the same time, I had a certain amount of confidence. I'd had a chance to play several of the software demos which were being introduced at the announcement event, and I was impressed with the creative game ideas that took advantage of the capabilities of the DS—ideas that we hardware designers would never have thought of! After playing those demos, I became more confident in the DS—I thought, "This is gonna work."



Mr. Kenichi Sugino, Manager, Design Group, Research & Engineering Dept., Nintendo Co., Ltd.

Why do you feel that the redesign and functionality changes of the DS Lite were needed?

Fortunately, a large variety of software was developed and released for the Nintendo DS that appealed to a wide range of consumers. [So] we made the design change in order to make the DS hardware more approachable to consumers regardless of age, gender, or game experience level.

The DS has many features and functions, so we wanted to be careful to prevent any misconceptions on the part of consumers that the DS was too complicated or difficult to use.

In your opinion, how do the new features introduced in the Nintendo DSi system change the platform?

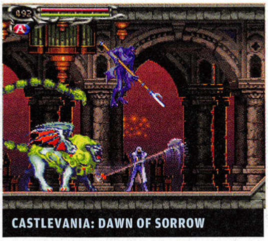
For the Nintendo DSi, our goal was to create a system that becomes more personalized through using it—so the DS becomes "My DS." The Nintendo DSi allows [you] to take [and store] pictures, to bring along your favorite music, and install your favorite [DSiWare] games and play whenever you want. I think these functions deepen the relationship between consumers and their DS systems.

After five years of breaking sales records, how do you view the impact that the Nintendo DS has had on gaming?

The Nintendo DS encouraged people who had never experienced games before to play games, and that caused the entire concept of video games to change and expand. I think that's the most important thing.

Game Changers

Why has the DS been so incredibly popular? We thought we had a good idea, but just to be sure, we consulted a dozen of the system's most talented game creators. Each of them had a hand in delivering some of the handheld's best titles, and they had plenty to say on the subject.



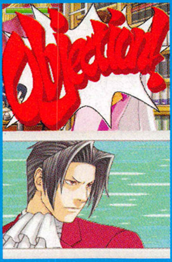
CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW

1. Satisfy the Gamers

It's well known that the unique features and revolutionary game experiences of the DS have made it a hit with many people who had never played games before, but the system wouldn't have gotten anywhere without overwhelming support from the kind of core users that play games the most.

And while features such as stylus control have a lot to offer, the designers of the DS smartly chose to allow game creators to ignore them when they want to. "[The] touch screen might not be the most suitable [or precise] tool to use when playing," explains **KOJI IGARASHI**, whose DS Castlevania titles stick with classic controls. "[I mainly use it] in gameplay areas that don't require such precision [and stick with] the Control Pad and buttons for [the kind of precise action] that I am good at making."

WayForward's **MATT BOZON** also lauds the system's old-school chops. "The Nintendo DS was created in the image of the Super NES controller, [which is] easily the greatest controller in the history of gaming (Nutter Butter shape and all). Wireless co-op would probably have been enough to inspire those of us who grew up with Nintendo, but adding that dual-screen Game & Watch setup made the DS perfect for complex games, especially ones where you're swapping to a subscreen or a map all the time." Dementium: The Ward director **JOOLS WATSHAM** summarizes the system's core-gamer appeal nicely: "It is powerful. It has many input devices. It supports multiplayer. Its portability is convenient. It has pretty much everything you need for any game type."



MOTOHIDE ESHIRO'S NEXT GAME:

Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth (Feb. 2010)
A new lead character and a new style of play headline Capcom's latest entry in its hugely popular series about outrageous lawyers.

2. Redefine What Games Can Be

More than by any of its other accomplishments, the DS is defined by the way it introduced entirely new ways to enjoy video games. Many groundbreaking titles were created simply because their creators felt compelled to see what they could do with the system's assortment of flexible new features. "Without DS, The World Ends with You would not exist," says **TATSUYA KANDO**, the game's director. "One of the main objectives of the project was in fact to link all of the unique features of the DS hardware, such as the touch screen, dual screens, and wireless function, to the game content. For this reason, the final product turned out to be something that could only be played on DS."

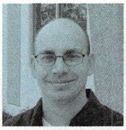
The challenge to make the most of the handheld's abilities has also been the driving force behind **JEREMIAH SLACZKA**'s games. "All the ideas I've come up with—Drawn to Life, Lock's Quest, and Scribblenauts—came out of wanting to really utilize the system's attributes, the best of which, in my opinion, is the touch screen. Drawing, building, and writing all made a lot of sense on the DS, whereas it just wouldn't have fit as well [on other platforms]." Similarly, Phantasy Star Ø producer **SATOSHI SAKAI** states, "I wouldn't have thought of visual chat had it not been for the touch screen." **MOTOHIDE ESHIRO** found another of the system's features to be invaluable. "[In Ace Attorney Investigations], the microphone voice-command system makes [things] more exciting for players. They can shout 'Objection,' 'Hold it!' and more, which will for sure...immerse them further into the gameplay."

Not only does the DS provide developers with unique possibilities, but Trauma Center producer **KATSURA HASHINO** credits the system with making it easier to innovate. "The hardware has its own set of basic rules," he explains. "[Since] designing a game system boils down to designing the game rules, [and] some of the rules are already determined by the DS...that helps us developers make DS games; the hardware takes the first creative step for you." For **TAKESHI NAGASHIMA**, whose Cooking Mama series became a hit on DS, the key is immersion. "The Nintendo DS is unique because it lets the player...[bring] the game world out into the player's world. It is very freeing as a designer to have

COOKING MAMA

OUR PANEL

Who better to give insight into the history of the DS than the people who helped shape it?



MATT BOZON
Creative Director, WayForward (Shantae: Risky's Revenge, Contra 4)

MOTOHIDE ESHIRO
Producer, Capcom (Ace Attorney Investigations, Apollo Justice)

TAKESHI NAGASHIMA
President and CEO, Cooking Mama Ltd. (Cooking Mama series)

MONA HAMILTON
VP of Marketing, Capcom

YUJI HORII
President, Armor Project (Dragon Quest series)

SHINJI HASHIMOTO
Corporate Executive, Square Enix

KATSURA HASHINO
Producer, Atlus (Trauma Center: Under the Knife)

KOJI IGARASHI
Producer, Konami (Castlevania series)

TATSUYA KANDO
Director, Square Enix (The World Ends with You)

SATOSHI SAKAI
Producer, Sega (Phantasy Star Ø)

JEREMIAH SLACZKA
Creative Director, 5th Cell (Drawn to Life, Scribblenauts)

JOOLS WATSHAM
Owner and Creative Director, Renegade Kid (Dementium series)

restrictive barriers removed. You can design almost anything that you wish on the Nintendo DS and it has a very natural feel because the technology is so immersive."

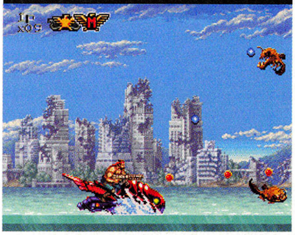
The end result of the system's rampant innovation is that everybody wants one—even people that don't normally play games. According to Capcom marketing VP **MONA HAMILTON**, "The DS's greater level of interactivity has helped to broaden [its] portfolio of games... and in so doing, has expanded the audience [that] publishers and developers typically reach."

YUJI HORII'S NEXT GAME:

Dragon Quest VI, IX (TBD)

With not one but two epic DS quests on the way, Yuji Horii should have RPG fans killing slimes and exploring unknown lands for quite some time.

CONTRA 4



3. Play Wherever You Want, Whenever You Can

Why has the DS outsold today's consoles by a wide margin? For **JOOLS WATSHAM** of Renegade Kid, the reason is simple: "The portability of the DS is what appeals to me the most. Whether I'm on my couch in the living room or on an airplane, I can always depend on my DS." Square Enix's **YUJI HORII** agrees. "The greatest advantage of a handheld game is that the player is not restricted to playing in front of a TV; handheld games can be played anywhere, and can be enjoyed even while watching TV."

PHANTASY STAR 0

The legendary Dragon Quest creator goes on to highlight another value of gaming on the go: "I think that the leveling system, a prevalent element in RPGs, has become less of a chore due to the hardware's portability. Now that you can play during short breaks, 'playing in bits' has become very fun. Even a short 10-minute break can turn into a good opportunity to level up a little." Phantasy Star 0 producer **SATOSHI SAKAI** also cites this as a crucial point. "Recent RPGs take more and more time, but people nowadays have less free time; not many people have the luxury to sit down and play RPGs as much as they like. In that sense, the mobility of the DS makes it possible to pick up and play in between a busy schedule."

In a world where many people seem to have increasingly little free time, the ability to play games whenever the opportunity arises is more important than ever. Thanks to the Nintendo DS, bus rides, plane trips, and even visits to the bathroom have become much more entertaining.

4. Classic 2-D Gaming

In the years that followed the 3-D explosion of the Nintendo 64 era, it appeared as if 2-D gaming was on its way to out. Not only were polygonal 3-D graphics more dazzling to look at thanks to realistic character animation and dynamic camera angles, but years of repetitive 2-D games had left traditional titles feeling stale. Side-scrolling games continued to survive, however, on handhelds such as the Game Boy Advance, and have come to thrive once again on the Nintendo DS.

It isn't hard to guess why more 2-D games are made for handhelds than for consoles. As Castlevania superproducer **KOJI IGARASHI** puts it, "If [you want] to have the sharp gameplay that only 2-D games can provide...then I think DS is the only hardware [for which it is] acceptable to [publish such a] game." Since players expect to see 2-D games on a handheld—and because the smaller budgets for handheld titles allow developers to take more risks—it's easier for creators to get sprite-based games published for the system. **MATT BOZON**, whose projects at WayForward are famous for pushing 2-D graphical detail and animation to new limits, offers a technical perspective: "At the 256 x 192 (x2 screens) resolution, you can still call pixel art 'current gen' and reap the huge benefits of tiled artwork. You can store a ton of animation at low resolution without the expensive memory usage, and [the DS] runs 2-D at 60 frames per second, which you've gotta have. Also, you get the option of powering your two-dimensional art with 3-D horsepower on a single screen like Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (still my favorite DS game), or splitting resources between both screens as in Contra 4 to fill the entire view with action at full frame rate." What all of this means is that the DS has the horsepower to make very impressive-looking 2-D visuals. When compared to the richly detailed worlds of Bozon's own Contra 4 or the Castlevania titles, 3-D games don't necessarily look better.

And why are 2-D games important to the appeal of the DS? Sharp pixel graphics are easy to see on a small screen, and these kinds of titles are often easier to pick up and play, making them accessible to a broad audience. Some types of games simply work best in 2-D, and for new players as well as those that can remember the time before the N64, this style of gaming continues to offer fun, compelling experiences that you rarely find on consoles.

MATT BOZON'S NEXT GAME:

Shantae: Risky's Revenge (Q1 2010)

This episodes in this gorgeous three-part action/platformer are sure to be the biggest DSiWare releases so far.

5. Keep Connected

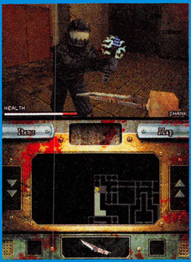
Multiplayer has been a crucial aspect of video games for as long as they've been around, and it is a big part of what has made the DS so popular. The system left its Game Boy forbearers in the dust by dropping the cumbersome cables that were used to link previous handhelds, and instead implementing wireless connectivity. Playing a handheld game against friends—whether in the same room or across the globe—became as quick and easy as playing a game alone.

Because the DS makes local and online multiplayer so easy, developers have thrown huge support behind these features. Asked why he thinks multiplayer gaming has exploded on DS, Phantasy Star 0 producer **SATOSHI SAKAI** confirms, "It's because Wi-Fi is readily available with DS. Even for a first-time developer on the platform like us, it was very smooth to develop a game on it." And according to **YUJI HORII**, nothing beats playing with friends face-to-face. "Taking part in a multiplayer session in the presence of friends and talking to them in person is much more lighthearted in nature than chatting through a keyboard. Even if someone slips up on a command, it all becomes a good laugh."

When it comes to staying connected via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, Nintendo DSi went a step further by introducing downloadable games. Not only does the DSiWare service provide players with the opportunity to buy more games at much lower prices than in stores, but it provides a chance to shine for many games that might never have been made. **MATT BOZON**, who spent years trying to get a publisher to support a sequel to his cult-favorite Game Boy Color adventure Shantae, was finally able to bring the series back as a sequence of DSiWare titles. "From a creator's perspective," he explains, "the only un-perfect thing about the DS has been the crowded [store] shelves that came as a result of the system's popularity. So when DSiWare opened up, we knew that was a place we wanted to be. We can finally get our games out there [in a way that makes them] immune to shelf-life decay and the swirling bargain-bin vortex, which has claimed many a quality title, matey. Not only do downloadable games still smell fresh as a daisy year after year, they can also share saved data across games, which is something most standard games can't do easily. We'll be putting that feature to good use in our new heroic belly-dancing game."

Long Live the King

With so many players and a seemingly endless flow of new games, the best could be yet to come from the Nintendo DS. Just as the Game Boy line of handhelds did before it, the DS has shown that it can evolve to meet the changing needs of consumers without losing any steam. Many of the experts we talked to believe that we've only scratched the surface of the DS's capabilities, or as The World Ends with You's **TATSUYA KANDO** puts it, "The platform still has yet to disclose its full potential." Dementium's **JOOLS WATSHAM** sees a lot of room for improvement: "Considering the power of the DS is similar to the Nintendo 64, I am surprised developers aren't trying harder to take advantage of its capabilities.... Too many publishers/developers sell the DS short by developing GBA-esque titles instead of N64-esque titles."



JOOLS WATSHAM'S NEXT GAME:

Dementium II (Feb. 2010)

Fans of the Mature-rated Dementium know what to expect from its sequel: mind-bending horror mixed with some of the handheld's most impressive first-person graphics.

No matter what the future holds for our favorite handheld, we have no doubt that we can expect more fun times and continued surprises—after all, those are the two things Nintendo does best. As **SHINJI HASHIMOTO**, a corporate executive at Square Enix, observes, "Nintendo, and only Nintendo—which [was there at] the origin of gaming with Game & Watch—could have created this hardware with the knowledge and experience [their staff has] cultivated over the years." Mr. Hashimoto, we couldn't agree more.

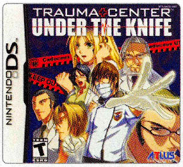
The 5 Most Important DS Games

Although the Nintendo DS has a seemingly endless library of great games, the following titles did more than most in shaping the system's first five years.

NINTENDO DS
nintendogs
Lab & Friends

Nintendogs (Aug. 2005)

This breakthrough title was the first game to fully demonstrate the type of revolutionary experiences the DS is capable of. It rewrote all the rules, showed us how immersive touch control can be, and became a massive hit by reaching out to new kinds of players.



Trauma Center: Under the Knife (Oct. 2005)

After a shaky initial lineup of games that were a clunky fit for the DS, Trauma Center stepped up to prove that stylus control can take gaming to a whole new level of interaction.

NINTENDO DS
Castlevania
Dawn of Sorrow
KONAMI

Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (Oct. 2005)

Just as headline-grabbing hits like Nintendogs were earning the DS a reputation as a system for casual gamers, along came Dawn of Sorrow to establish the handheld as a powerful platform for hardcore players, as well.

NINTENDO DS
MARIO KART DS

Mario Kart DS (Nov. 2005)

This was the game that cemented the handheld as one of the best places for multiplayer gaming, with its wildly popular local wireless play and the first major use of Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.

NINTENDO DS
DRAGON QUEST IX

Dragon Quest IX (TBD)

Already a hit overseas, the latest entry in Japan's biggest franchise had a huge impact on how developers perceive the DS by appearing on the system instead of a console. It legitimized the DS as not only today's top handheld, but as the reigning game system overall.

Graffiti
Full Screen
Photos remaining: 325
Clear
Capture
Switch
POWER
START
SELECT

I decide to make every day an adventure.

Play with two cameras to capture the world,
then use 11 unique lenses to make it your own.

NINTENDO DSi

www.nintendodsi.com

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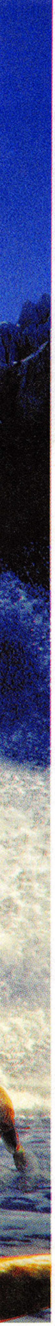
Colossal creatures, clever cooperation, contributive cats, and seven other reasons why you should be excited about Monster Hunter Tri for Wii.

THRILL

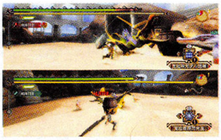
BY JUSTIN CHENG



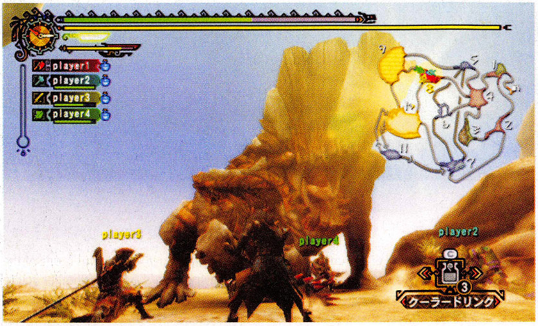
# of the HUNT

FOUR HUNTERS using their wits and weapons such as swords, lances, hammers, and bowguns, joining forces to take down an enormous dinosaurlike behemoth—what's not to like about that? Despite the awesome premise and several iterations since the series's launch five years ago, Capcom's Monster Hunter remains a mostly niche franchise here in the States. But here are 10 reasons—in no particular order—why newbies and veterans alike should check out Monster Hunter's Wii debut, Monster Hunter Tri.

SLAY TOGETHER



A major part of what makes Monster Hunter Tri so exciting is its emphasis on cooperative play. Up to four people can team up online, or two can play via a split screen, and embark on quests to capture or slay monsters. When we played the game, for example, we faced an animal that rushes its opponents like a rhinoceros. One hunter sets up a pitfall trap on the ground, then the others lure it into the trap by getting the monster to charge at them. Once the beast is snared, the stronger-armored-but-slower long sword- and lance-wielders run in and hack away while the weaker-armored bow-gunners snipe the massive creature from afar. Sure, it's a fairly simple strategy, but it's effective.



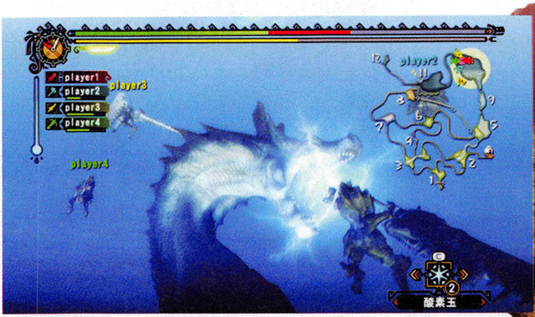
BIG *in* JAPAN

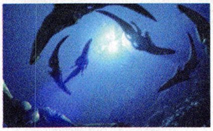
Monster Hunter is a huge hit in Japan. Not only do some die-hard fans dedicate hundreds of hours to the game (a phenomenon that happens on this side of the Pacific, too; the series's fans are pretty hardcore), but they also attend popular Monster Hunter events in which people (some in costume) gather, play together, and give feedback to the developers. There's also loads of Monster Hunter merchandise, from toys to art books to T-shirts to jackets. Monster Hunter Tri in particular was a huge hit in Japan, selling nearly a million units in that country alone at the time of this writing.

PLATFORM Wii | PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER CAPCOM | RELEASE MARCH 2010

HELLO, KITTY

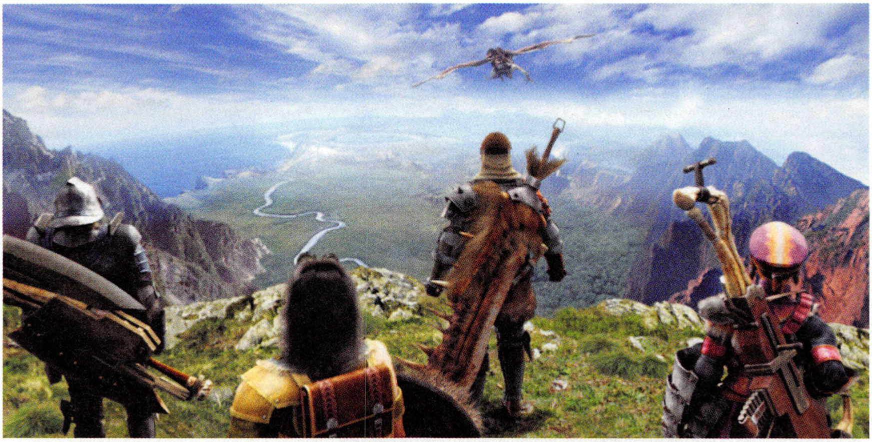
There's something very charming about the catlike Felynes, creatures that help you out by cooking for you (which can affect your stats) or selling you rare items in your village. It's hard not to like a game that features such adorable inhabitants—even if some Felynes in the wild will pick your pockets.





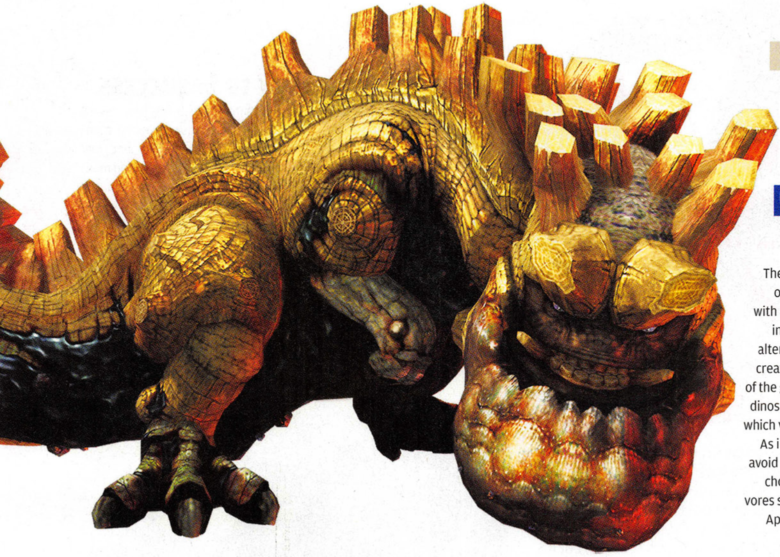
UNDER *the* SEA

One of Monster Hunter Tri's most significant additions is the inclusion of underwater combat. During one of our hunts, for instance, our prey was a dragon-like leviathan called a Lagiacrus. The fight plays out similarly to one on land—you still have a quick-dodge maneuver, though obviously you swim out of the way instead of roll—but you have to pay more attention to the monster's location. After all, the creature isn't just in front, behind, or to the sides of you; when you're in the water, it could be above or below you, too. Fortunately, swimming isn't a hassle: you can swim up or down by aiming the camera in the appropriate direction and pressing forward on the Control Stick.



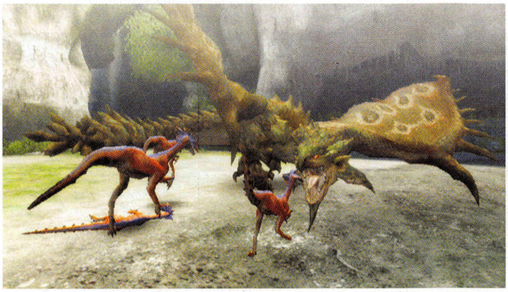
BEAUTY *and the* BEASTS

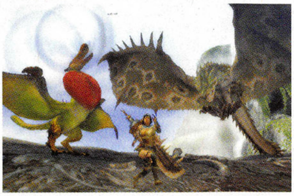
These screenshots give you a taste of what you can expect, but you don't get the full effect until you see Monster Hunter Tri in action. This is one of the most graphically impressive Wii games we've seen. It's not just the monsters (as awesome as they are); it's the environments, as well, whether you're hanging out in Moga Village or journeying through the mountainous, desert, aquatic, or volcanic areas. Of course, it's hard to stop and enjoy the scenery when you're locked in a life-or-death conflict....



MONSTER MASH

The world of Monster Hunter is at once familiar and foreign, filled with all manner of beasties, including fairly normal—albeit slightly altered—fish, insects, and deerlike creatures. Of course, the real stars of the game are the more fantastical dinosaur- and dragonlike monsters, which vary in size and ferociousness. As in real life, it's probably best to avoid carnivores unless you have no choice. On the other hand, herbivores such as the prehistoric-looking Aptonoth are fairly tame and are good sources of tasty meat.





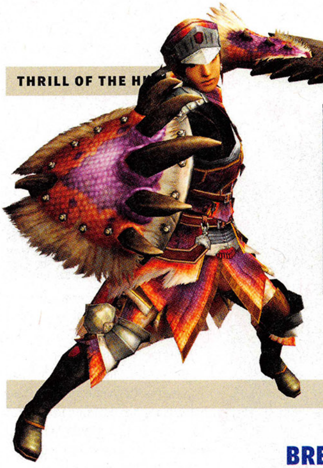
BEAST WARS

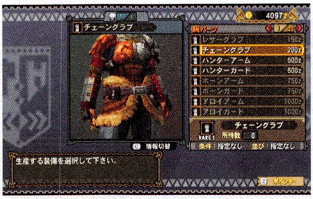
Whereas in previous iterations of the franchise monsters reacted only to the player, they now interact with one another in interesting ways. Some may be natural enemies, and you can see them fighting each other. On the other hand, some animals are allies. Take the relationship between the avian Kurepeko and the dragonesque Rathian for example. The Kurepeko isn't too intimidating on its own, but it can copy the roar of the Rathian, thereby calling the beast to the Kurepeko's aid and giving you a much more challenging encounter than you might have expected. The moral of the story: don't underestimate *any* monsters in this game.

Monster Hunting 101

Don't know the first thing about hunting monsters? No problem! Monster Hunter Tri producer Ryozo Tsujimoto has five tips for newbies.

1. "Observe the movements of the monsters and understand their patterns of movement."
2. "Think about character skills and attributes, then decide upon the purpose of your next weapon or defense mechanism."
3. "Memorize the weaknesses of each monster."
4. "If your weapon's compatibility with the targeted monster is poor, challenge the monster using a different weapon."
5. "Whatever happens, have fun!"





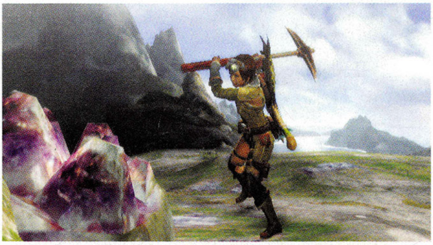
生産する装備を選択して下さい。

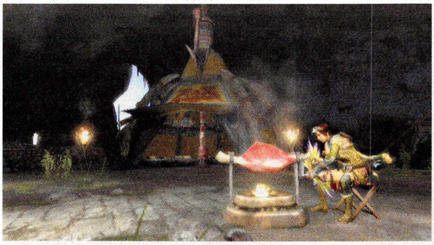
DRESS *for* SUCCESS

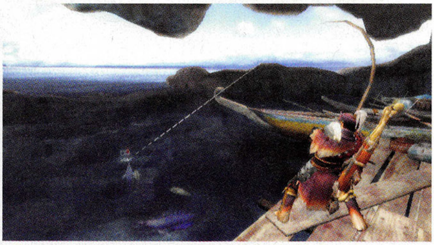
Other than simply being fun, there's another reason you're hunting monsters: it's profitable—and not just because villagers will reward you monetarily for a job well done. You can also procure valuable items from slain beasts, and these items (along with ore you mine) can be used to customize your armor or build new armor. Equipping specific outfits gives your character certain skills, such as resistance to poison, improved stamina, or faster health recovery. (One particularly useful skill allows you to keep track of your prey at all times.)

BREAK TIME

Despite the title, Monster Hunter Tri is not just about hunting monsters. You can do things such as mine for ore, go fishing, or cook. Fishing takes place in a fairly simple minigame in which you watch the bobber on your fishing line. The second the bobber submerges, you have to set the hook to make a successful catch. Cooking is also about quick reflexes, but it's auditory instead of visual. When you start cooking raw monster meat on a spit, music begins to play; if you stop precisely when the music stops, you've cooked the meat to a perfect well-done (which can greatly improve your stamina).





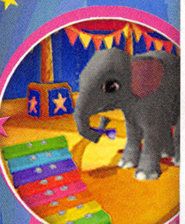


ARMED *to the* TEETH

Sticks and stones may break bones, but you'll need more that those to defeat these beasties—good thing you have a wide array of weapons to choose from. The most basic equipment are the sword and shield—one in each hand. This is a pretty effective combination; however, the more you hunt, the more you'll want something that packs more of a punch. You could use the lance-and-shield combo, or any of the two-handed weapons, such as the great sword, hammer, or long sword, or the brand-new switch axe, which can transform into either a sword or an axe at the press of a button. Each of these larger weapons has its pros and cons, so you'll need to decide whether speed or strength is more important to you. For those who prefer to keep their distance, there are also three types of bowguns: light, medium, and heavy. The heavier the bowgun, the more damage you deal (at the expense of your character's maneuverability). As with armor, you can build new weapons from the raw materials you've collected.

CIRCUS FRIENDS FOREVER

NTR-BRLE-USA
NINTENDO DS™
RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY
THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH™
CIRCUS FRIENDS
ASIAN ELEPHANTS
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
2K PLAY



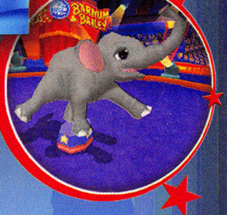
Get musical with the xylophone challenge

Dress up your pachyderm pal in a variety of wacky and wonderful outfits

Play and practice activities like painting, plate spinning and even juggling

Keep your friend clean with bubbly baths

Help your elephant show off for the Big-Top performance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Game and system sold separately.

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Not everyone can say they are Circus Friends with an Asian Elephant. But you can! Care for your playful pachyderm by making sure it eats well, stays clean and healthy, and gets daily exercise. Hone your training skills to help your friend star in *The Greatest Show On Earth*™!

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CAT DADDY games

2K PLAY

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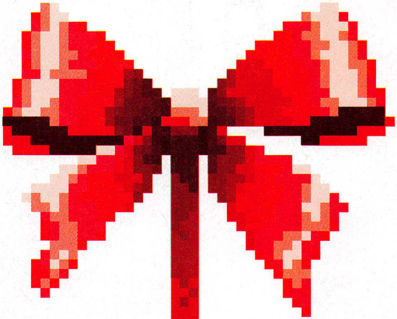
GEAR UP *for the* HOLIDAYS!

Nintendo Power presents all the great gaming gear we'd like to score this holiday season, and if we love this stuff, we're sure you will too.

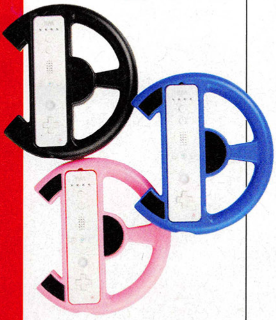


IT DOESN'T MATTER whether you're planning to give or receive; if you want to show your Nintendo fan cred, look no further than the assortment your power shoppers have put together on these pages. Our gaming gear product survey ranges from clothes and accessories to books and slot cars. You read that right—Mario Kart-themed slot cars! Who saw that one coming? Many of the products featured can be found at your local retailers, but others, as noted here, must be purchased directly from an online store. Start making your list!

THE FORCE IS WITH Wii

Wii
STAR WARS CLONE WARS
Wii
STAR WARS
POWER A
CLONE TROOPER™ BLASTER

You don't have to travel to a galaxy far, far away to tap into the power of the Force. The Clone Trooper Blaster for the Wii console from manufacturer Bensussen Deutsch & Associates (BDA) is ideal for Star Wars Clone Wars: Republic Heroes or any other light-gun-style game. For more cool Star Wars accessories for Wii and the Nintendo DS system, visit http://powera.com.

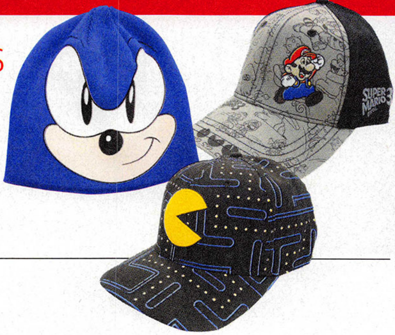


Grab the Wheel

We suspect that if everyone had attractive colored steering wheels, such as these Wii steering-wheel accessories from BDA, nobody would ever leave their cars. (More BDA products are available at http://powera.com.)

Heads Up, Shoppers

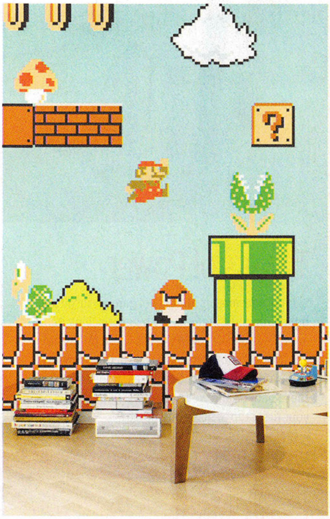
Hats to look cool and hats to keep your ears toasty (while still looking cool) are available at fine retailers everywhere. These retro-styled caps from Bioworld give your head that classic gamer look, and putting one on is a lot easier than shaving your skull and tattooing your scalp, although that is always an option.

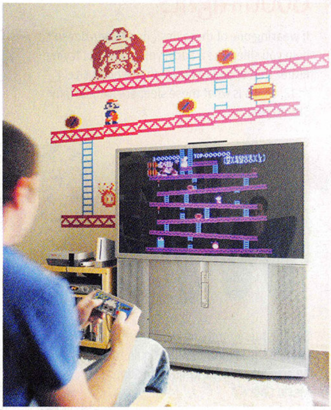


BY SCOTT PELLAND

Extreme Room Makeovers

When I was a kid, if you wanted to live inside a fantasy world you had to find a magic wardrobe. Nowadays you can just slap awesome Mushroom Kingdom or DK graphics on the wall—thanks to Blik wall decals—and suddenly you're there! You can find Blik products at www.whatisblik.com or check the site's retail-store locator to find a merchant near you.





Can you tell where the game ends and reality begins?

Put This In Your Shopping Kart

Carrera's Mario Kart slot-car tracks and racers rank near the top of our shopping list. They're German, which means they're more highly engineered than a nuclear reactor, and there are two sets to choose from: Carrera Go!!! Mario Kart (based on Mario Kart DS) and Carrera Digital 143 Mario Kart Wii (shown here).

LET'S-A PARTY LIKE IT'S 2009!

The Super Mario Bros. Deluxe Party Pack from www.birthdayexpress.com is suitable for birthday parties, holiday parties, and Mario parties! Everything you need for a festive occasion is included, except a cake of our heroic plumber. Check out the website for more options and information.

Eye-Popping Figures

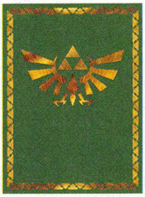
These incredibly detailed characters by First 4 Figures are so lifelike that gullible folks may think the manufacturers have found a way to create life from molded poly-stone casts. You can shop for these little beauties online at www.first4figures.com. Pictured here are Zora Tunic Link, Samus's ship, and the fabulous Ms. A herself, minus body armor.

You should have an ophthalmologist standing by to pop those eyes back into your sockets when you get a load of Samus in her Zero Suit.

Guides to Success

Prima offers player's guides, plus special editions and collector's editions guides for many of the most popular games. Whether you want the step-by-step walkthrough or you're building a library of gaming excellence, Prima's got you covered, and you can find the books on newsstands and bookstores pretty much everywhere you go.

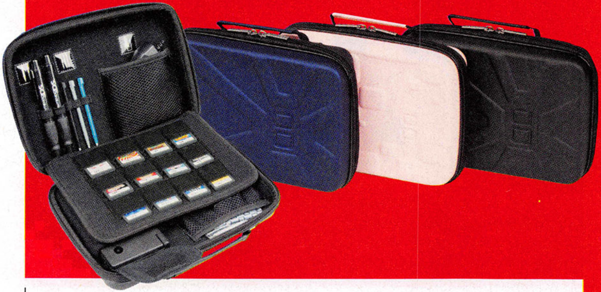
PRIMA OFFICIAL GAME GUIDE
LEGO
PRIMA OFFICIAL GAME GUIDE
PREMIERE EDITION
New SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii



This hardback collector's edition for The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks is a work in progress. We expect the monks are madly scribbling away in their cloisters.

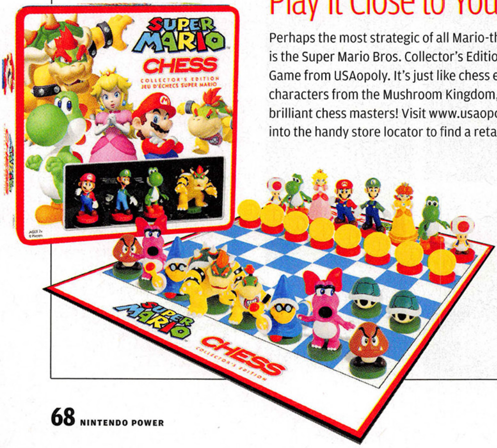
YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

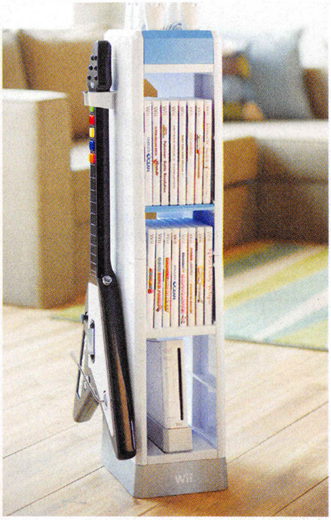
Thanks to BDA, you can tote your Nintendo DSi with style. The Ultimate Nintendo DSi Kit comes in three colors and stores your system, games, styluses, electrical adapter, cleaning cloth, and good times neatly inside. Check it out at http://powera.com.



Play It Close to Your Chess

Perhaps the most strategic of all Mario-themed games is the Super Mario Bros. Collector's Edition Chess Game from USAopoly. It's just like chess except you use characters from the Mushroom Kingdom, all of whom are brilliant chess masters! Visit www.usaopoly.com and tap into the handy store locator to find a retailer near you.


SUPER MARIO
CHESS
COLLECTOR'S EDITION
JEU D'ÉCHECS SUPER MARIO
SUPER MARIO
CHESS
COLLECTOR'S EDITION

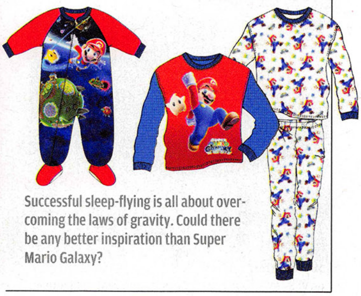


Towers of Power

Slam Brands makes all sorts of gaming furniture, but the company tells us the biggest-selling items are these console towers with built-in guitar-holders. There's enough room to pile in the favorites from your game collection, so all we need is 10 of these babies, and we're set. Toys"R"Us should be your first stop to bring one home.

Good Nights

If wearing one of these designer PJ sets doesn't help you sleep like a baby, you're just not trying. Either that or you're larger than a boy's size 4 to 12, which is what these sleepers from Briefly Stated run.

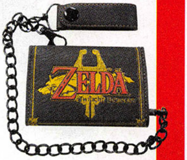


Successful sleep-flying is all about overcoming the laws of gravity. Could there be any better inspiration than Super Mario Galaxy?

Get Accessorized!

Would you step outside without a classic-game bag, pin, or wallet? We didn't think so. Take a look at these gaming accessories that guarantee the world will see you for the true gamer you are. Bioworld products are sold wherever retailers really understand gamer chic.

Hey, I actually own that bag!


ZELDA
Twilight Princess

Imagine: you can store up to 80 Rupees in this wallet!

Oh, sweet hedgehogs! They made Sonic into a tote!

Pak In Some Fun

Enterplay's Trading Card Fun Paks may include action-pose cards, special foil cards, trivia cards, stickers, miniature standees, FunTat temporary tattoos, and other little surprises. The Mario Kart Wii and Super Mario Galaxy Trading Card Fun Paks are available wherever fun is highly valued.

EnterPlay
Super Mario Galaxy
Trading Card Fun Paks!
Tattoos, Pop-out Standees, Trivia, & More!

Mario Kart Wii
Trading Card Fun Paks!
Tattoos, Special Stickers, Foil Cards, Trivia & More!
EnterPlay

Donkey Kong

DK Goes Monster

OK, confession time: as much as we'd love to say you could unwrap the actual Donkey Kong monster truck this holiday season, it's not going to happen. But you can live vicariously through some cool DK Monster truck toys and apparel found at www.monsterjam.com. Once outfitted, you can jump over your dog and pretend you're in a monster-truck jam. That's what we do.

We think you'll agree: the neckwear totally makes the truck.

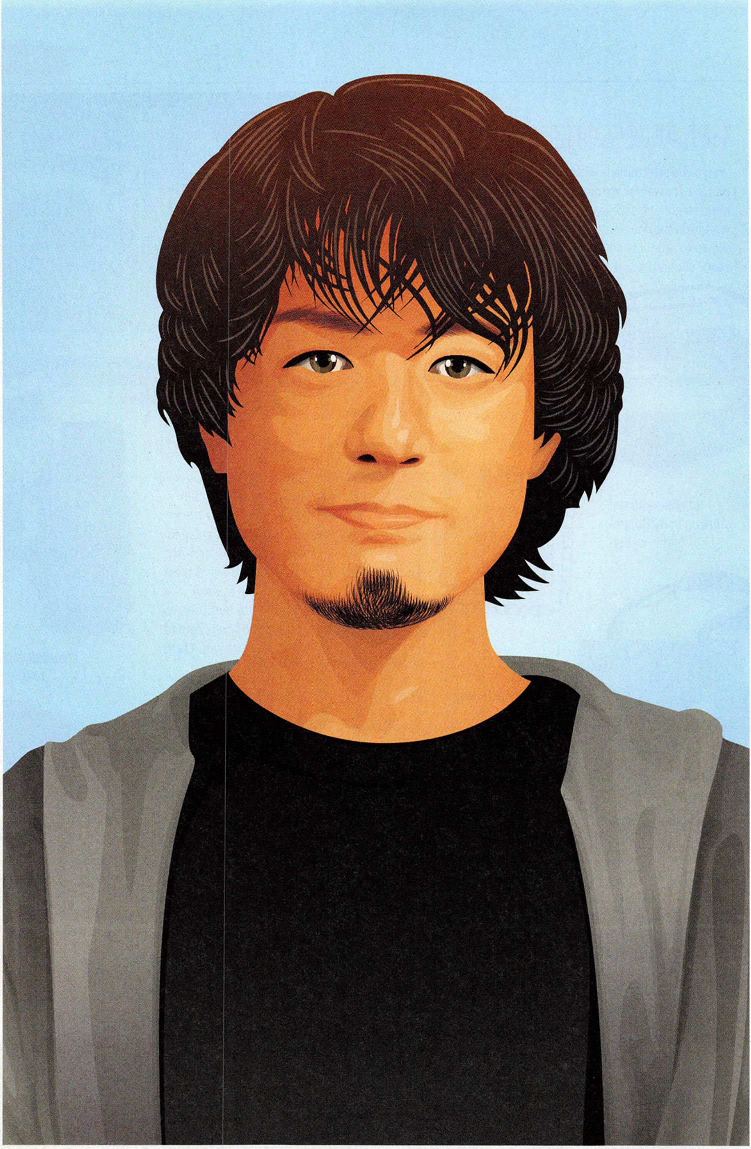
Donkey Kong
Donkey Kong Racing

OUR LIST IS COMPLETE!

There you have it—enough supercool gift ideas to cause any game fan to swoon. I've passed out three times already writing this article. Before it happens again, I'm going shopping. See you in the check-out line!

34

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
August 13, 1969

BIRTHPLACE
Hiroshima City, Japan

POSITION
President, Vanillaware

BEST KNOWN FOR
Keeping 2-D alive and well; making us hungry

FAVORITE FOOD
Anything

CURRENT PROJECTS
An unannounced title to be revealed in 2010

George Kamitani

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

The third dimension is great and all, but sometimes nothing beats a lovingly hand-drawn sprite. One of the few remaining masters of that craft is Jouji "George" Kamitani, head of independent studio Vanillaware. With games like Princess Maker, Odin Sphere, and most recently, Muramasa: The Demon Blade, Kamitani's team has proven that 2-D visuals can still impress in this age of polygons and normal mapping. A man of many talents, Kamitani serves not only as lead artist on most of Vanillaware's titles, but also as writer and director. His keen interest in mythology has been an obvious source of inspiration throughout his career, providing gamers with a unique (and always beautiful) take on some of the world's most enduring stories.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you get into the video game business?
GEORGE KAMITANI
Back when I was a high-school student, one of my friends helped me to land a part time job as a subcontractor for a game-development company. I continued to work there while going to college, and then after I graduated, I joined Capcom. Since then, I have been consistently working in the game industry.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
Let's see...I remember that when I was in elementary school, I was really into movies, and specifically films with lots of cool special effects. I just remember itching to get an eight-millimeter movie camera to make a movie by filming a doll frame by frame to create a time-lapse effect. But the camera was too expensive and I wasn't able to obtain one. But, if you think about it, my job now as a game creator isn't that dissimilar to filmmaking. I may be able to say that my dream has actually come true!

What were your early years in the industry like? What did you learn from working at Capcom?
When I was working for the subcontractor part-time, I was a 2-D pixel artist for several games on Nintendo's Famicom (NES) console, and I was also a programmer on a few games for the MSX platform. I joined Capcom because I wanted to learn how to direct an entire game project.

How did Vanillaware get started? What is the company's "mission statement," so to speak?
In 2002, I formed a new company that worked on a massively multiplayer PC-based action-RPG called Fantasy Earth for Enix. (This was before their merger with Square.) And that company evolved into the Vanillaware that exists now. The core philosophy of Vanillaware is to create original games. I would like to do my best to continue creating original games long into the future.

What does the name Vanillaware mean?
Vanilla ice cream is the ice cream flavor with the most enduring popularity. I would like to create games that have stability like that of vanilla ice cream.

What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of being an independent studio?
If you belong to a big company, you can only work on a project if it adheres to the company's corporate vision. But I have a natural tendency and affinity to create certain types of projects. So I needed to find a company that would like my concepts and could accept what I wanted to create. In that sense, being an independent development company is an advantage for me; even if one company says no, maybe some other company would like the ideas. Disadvantage would be a lack of funding, which is typical for small and medium-sized businesses. There is always a risk of bankruptcy.

What do you like about 2-D games? Why is it a valid artistic choice, even today?
3-D games can express realistic worlds through detailed calculations and complex geometry; however, 2-D games can express a sort of uniquely distorted, more artistic world that appeals to me. But the simple reason why I make 2-D games is because I am an old-time gamer who likes traditional games.

From a purely visual standpoint, what are some of your all-time favorite 2-D games from other developers?
I think that Capcom's Darkstalkers series stands apart from other games in visual presentation and game concept. It really set a new graphical standard, and it made a big impact when I saw the artwork being created right in front of me at Capcom.

Do you ever foresee Vanillware making a 3-D game?
I have some ideas for a 3-D game.

You've taken on many roles in game development—writer, artist, director, etc. Which is your favorite, and why?
If I could just choose one of them, I would be compelled to choose director. But I still want to draw and write. Since I have only one body, our staff

> *"The simple reason why I make 2-D games is because I'm an old-time gamer who likes traditional games."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

Despite heading a relatively small team (about 20 people), Kamitani has given us three games in the last three years. Let's hope he can maintain that pace while continuing to wow us. The only thing we know about his next title is that it will be another 2-D offering.

1P
JOIN-IN
JOIN-IN
JOIN-IN

SATURDAY NIGHT SLAM MASTERS
1993, ARCADE
SUB-PLANNER

INSERT COIN
INSERT COIN
INSERT COIN

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: TOWER OF DOOM
1994, ARCADE
SUB-PLANNER

ENEMY
GRADRIEL
POWER
LEVEL 3

PRINCESS CROWN
1997, SEGA SATURN
DIRECTOR, CHARACTER DESIGNER

FANTASY EARTH
2006, PC
ART DIRECTOR

Power Profiles

always blames me for delays, though.

Many of your games combine action and RPG elements. What do you like about that combination? And why do you prefer that over pure action or a pure RPG?
I want to make a pure action game or RPG, but since I like both, I can't help being greedy and adding both aspects.

It seems like you've always had an intense interest in mythology. How did that come about? Why is mythology a good basis for games?
This is just because I like fantasy, but I cannot stop myself once I start researching mythology or lore to discover the origins of fantasy. It's so easy to lose myself in ancient history and forgotten mysteries!

Do you have a favorite mythological story or character?
Stories about Loki in Norse mythology are very impressive and interesting. If I ever have a chance, I would like to make a game based on Norse mythology again someday.

In one of your previous interviews with Nintendo Power, you mentioned that you had to cut out some RPG elements from Muramasa. What were those elements that got cut?
I wanted to have a lot of features such as special subevents for NPCs who are standing around throughout the game, but I unfortunately gave up on those features because of a delay of schedule.

Food preparation has played a significant role in recent Vanillaware titles. Why is that? Are you or members of your staff big cooking fans?
You've just revealed my secret interest—food! Eating is one of three basic human appetites, and we can become happy by simply eating food. I'm not sure if games can make people happy, but I will be happy if I can bring users at least some piece of happiness by re-creating the pleasure of eating.

If you could make any game without worrying about time or budget, what would it be like?
I would like to make an old-school 2-D pixel-based game with a staff of about three people.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
It's really fun for me to imagine various dream-like features or designs before doing the actual game design. However, the process by which our staff realizes those ideas results in much higher quality than I ever expected, so that actually excites me more.

If you weren't making games, what do you think you'd be doing?
I would work as an apprentice chef preparing okonomiyaki, a Japanese savory pancake containing a variety of delicious ingredients. I'd probably try to get a job at a good okonomiyaki place where I went very often back when I was student.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
If it's a problem with a part of the game that I created, I encourage myself to re-create it from scratch, and if it's a problem created by someone else on the staff, I have to be tough and see that it gets fixed.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
Many of my senior coworkers worked on the development of arcade games when I worked for Capcom. Now most of them have already become managers and don't directly work on development. However, I'm still pursuing the level of brilliance they exhibited when I create my games.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I study and play various tabletop role-playing-game books written by Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson very often these days. I always carry *Sorcery!* in my bag. Sorry for talking about game books despite your asking about other forms. However, it's a masterpiece that I would like to bring to my grave.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
My hobby is my work! So collecting reference materials while thinking about ideas for the next titles or brainstorming and sketching new ideas increases my health bar.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
An ability to transport backwards and forwards in time. I could stick to the schedule if I had this ability.

> *"I will be happy if I can bring users at least some piece of happiness by re-creating the pleasure of eating."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

2 Chain!!
BOSS

ODIN SPHERE
2007, PLAYSTATION 2
DIRECTOR, LEAD ARTIST, WRITER

0:10
1000
42/50

GRIM GRIMOIRE
2007, PLAYSTATION 2
DIRECTOR, LEAD ARTIST, WRITER

MURAMASA: THE DEMON BLADE
2009, Wii
DIRECTOR, LEAD ARTIST, WRITER

FROM A LEADER IN GAME DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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DigiPen Institute of Technology, recognized by the industry as a premier game development college, presents a two-week summer workshop series designed to introduce participants of all experience levels to the fundamentals of *game programming*, *3D computer animation*, *game design* and *robotics*.

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Get a sneak peek of the Workshops at the **ProjectFUN Summer Workshop Preview Day** on Saturday, April 24!

Attendees will receive a **$100.00 discount** toward any one of the Summer Workshops.

To find out more, register for Preview Day, or research online options, please visit:

WORKSHOPS.DIGIPEN.EDU

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INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Redmond, WA 98052
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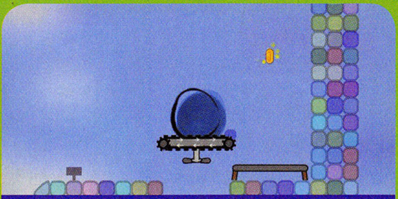
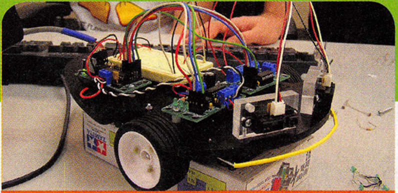
www.digipen.edu

GAME PROGRAMMING

3D ANIMATION



GAME DESIGN



ROBOTICS

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John H. Schnatter

"Papa" John Schnatter, Founder

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Wii MotionPlus
Wii

and an additional Wii MotionPlus™ accessory

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Wii
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BONUS Wii MotionPlus INSIDE! À l'intérieur Incluido
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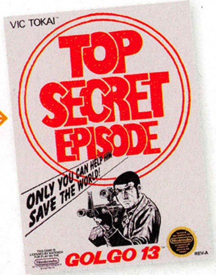
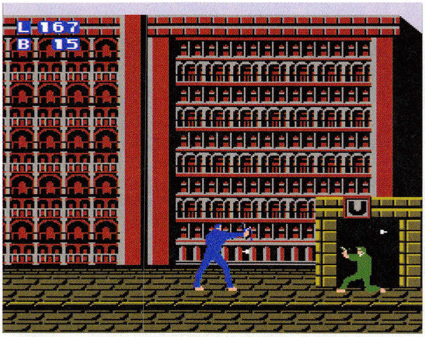
GOLGO 13: TOP SECRET EPISODE



What? Are you telling us that you haven't played Golgos 1-12?



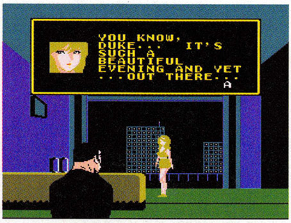
Duke may be a world-class sniper, but he's about to regret skipping "learn to shoot while ducking" day at assassin school.

PLATFORM: NES
DEVELOPER: VIC TOKAI
PUBLISHER: VIC TOKAI
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 1988
COVERED IN ISSUES: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6
AMOUNT OF HEALTH THAT SMOKING REGENERATES IN REAL LIFE: 0. REMEMBER THAT, KIDS.

The '80s were such an innocent time. Back then, video games were seen as strictly kids' stuff, and grown-ups assumed that any game released on the NES must be as cute and harmless as "that Mary-o game that's so darn popular these days." Some games of the era defied that perception, though. Witness Golgo 13: Top Secret Episode, a game chock-full of adult situations and pixelated violence that showed Reagan-era youngsters how awesome it was to be an assassin.

We Americans didn't know it at the time, but the game was based on the popular manga series of the same name. You played as Duke Togo, a supersniper who went by the alias Golgo 13. A helicopter containing a biological weapon was shot down over the Statue of Liberty, and Duke was framed for the crime. To clear his name and recover the weapon's vaccine, Duke became entangled in a web of action, intrigue, and shooting dudes.

The gameplay was an odd mixture of different styles, leading to a large amount of variety. The game began in a standard side-scrolling view with enemies appearing from the left and right sides of the screen. Occasionally, a gun would appear in the foreground, triggering a first-person shooting segment. Other stages played like a side-scrolling shooter or a 3-D maze. There were also ample dialogue sequences to help advance the plot.



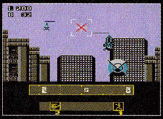
YOU KNOW, DUKE... IT'S SUCH A BEAUTIFUL EVENING AND YET ...OUT THERE.

To be honest, Golgo 13 wasn't a great game, but what made it stand out back in the day were its mature themes. Duke could smoke cigarettes to regain health. He hooked up with female informants in hotel rooms after missions. When he sniped a bad guy, blood squirted from the victim's head. This was stuff that NES players weren't used to seeing back in the day. The game proved so popular that the significantly better-looking sequel, The Mafat Conspiracy, was released in the US two years later. Since there was no ESRB back then, no one noticed how "naughty" either game was, so players were able to have their minds warped in peace. Sorry, kids of today. You missed out. **—PHIL T.**

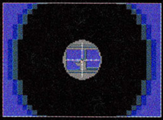
I win all my online auctions at the last second.

DUKE OF ALL TRADES

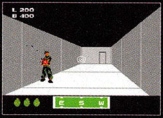
There are many different styles of gameplay in Golgo 13. Just look at the myriad things that Duke Togo can do.



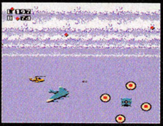
SHOOTING GALLERY NES Zapper support would have been fun here. Duke had to blast bad guys and enemy helicopters from a first-person view.



SNIPING Duke's sniper scope might seem a little blocky, but it was perfect for taking out faraway bad guys.



MAZE Though these confusing 3-D mazes look primitive by today's standards, they were fairly impressive on the NES.



SHOOTER Duke hopped into a helicopter, and the game became a side-scrolling shooter along the lines of Konami's classic Gradius.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
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REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

After an 18-year absence from consoles, 2-D Mario action returns in New Super Mario Bros. Wii. Is it all that we'd hoped? The answer is just a page away....

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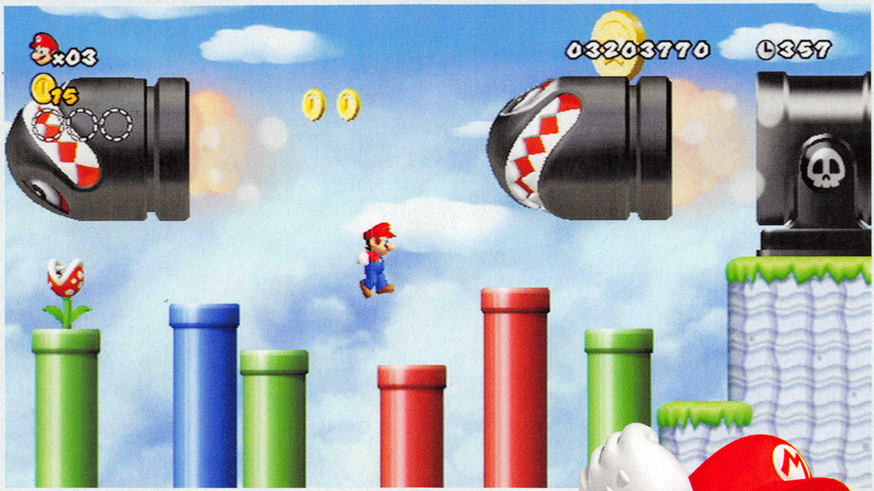


Jump for Joy

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii

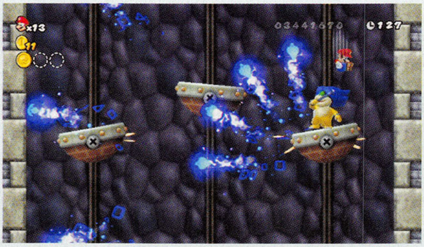
RATING: 9.0

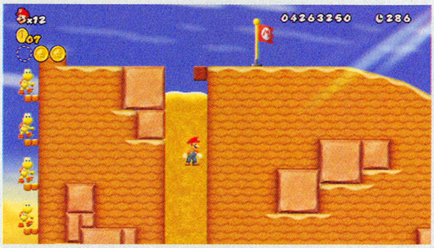
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

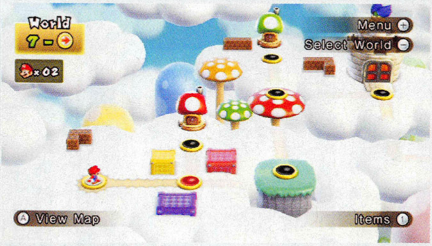
This is why you're a Nintendo fan. At some point in your life you played a Mario or Zelda game, or a title from another long-running Nintendo series, and were hooked on the kind of creative, charismatic, well-crafted classics that only Nintendo can create. New Super Mario Bros. Wii, the latest high-production platformer in the series that established the genre, unsurprisingly—but no less impressively—delivers the good times Nintendo is famous for. It's sure to win the publisher a new generation of devoted players.

Like its predecessor for the Nintendo DS handheld, New Super Mario Bros. Wii is a back-to-basics platformer in the style of the original NES Super Mario Bros. (the default control method is to hold the Wii Remote controller sideways like an NES controller; a Nunchuk controller can also be attached if you prefer the feel of the Control Stick). This game's levels are more varied and wider in scope, however, with more room for vertical exploration. The game also incorporates elements from other 2-D Mario titles, most notably Super Mario Bros. 3. As in that game, NSMB Wii puts some very fun new suits to prominent use and brings back the nerve-wracking airship stages. Also, the basic left-to-right world maps of the DS title have been improved upon with broader, less-predictable areas that are reminiscent of the excellent maps in SMB3 and Super Mario World. The result is a game that feels very much like a direct sequel to New Super Mario Bros. for DS, but is better in every way, proffering a fuller set of flavors sampled from the rest of the series.

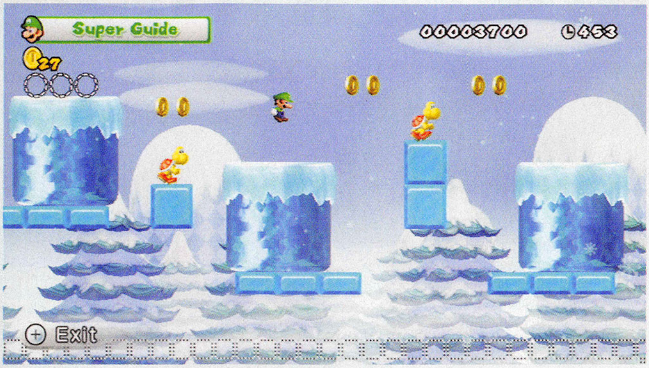
NSMB Wii does exactly what you want a sequel to do: add a lot of fun new stuff without mucking up what made the past games great. Despite the new headline-grabbing multiplayer and player-assist features (more on those in a minute), this is a Mario platformer in the most classic sense. In fact, the game's old-school difficulty makes it one of the most challenging titles of the series. If Nintendo's high-profile success with less-demanding games like Wii Sports and Wii Fit ever made you question the company's ability to produce the kind of

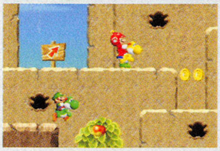


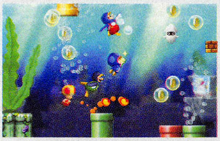




[Above] It's nice to know that many of Mario's old tricks still work. [Below] Yoshi is fun, but rare.







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Is Super Guide a Good Idea?

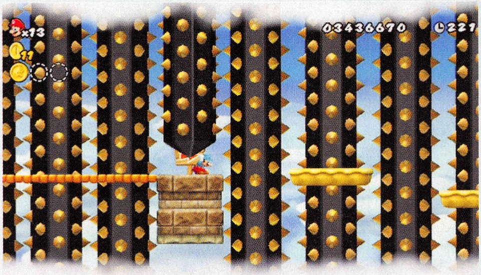
The option to put the game on autopilot through tough spots is a radical new idea, and one that some gamers have worried might make the game less challenging or rewarding. Thankfully, any such concerns are unwarranted. You never have to accept the help, and it isn't even offered until you fail a level eight times. Also, you can't find hidden paths, unlock secret stages, or collect all the Star Coins this way, so only top players can complete the game fully. Everyone's a winner!

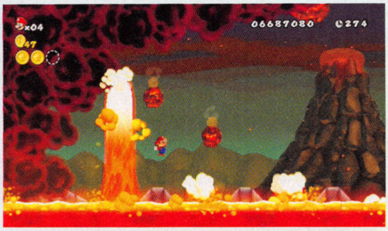
VERDICT:
YES

hardcore classics that defined its past consoles, NSMB Wii proves that Nintendo hasn't lost its edge. The action is undeniably more difficult than in the DS New Super Mario Bros., and the game is all the better for it. The levels are daunting but never unreasonably tough (at least, not for anyone that's beaten a past Mario game or two). Although you'll frequently kick the bucket, clever thinking, practice, and picking the right power-ups will soon get you to a stage's midway checkpoint, and then on to the flagpole at the finish.

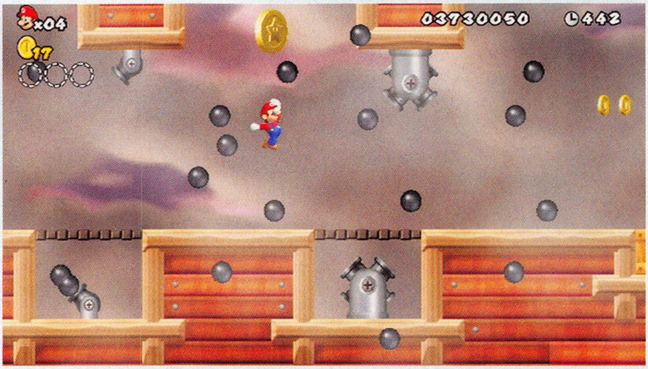
What *is* a bit of a pain, however, is the game's Super Mario Galaxy-style spin move. There's never a real need to use it, and since the move is triggered with even a slight shake of the remote, I fell to my death a few times after accidentally activating it. Also, it's unfortunate that you can save your progress only upon beating a castle stage, of which there are only two in each world. If you were to, say, lose your last life during a castle level, it would mean having to replay several previous stages. Continuing from your last save populates the world map with minigames that provide a chance to stockpile more lives and power-ups, but doing so is a tedious task when you're raring to have another go at the stage that finished you off. This isn't a big complaint, though, and—as in New Super Mario Bros. for DS—beating the game enables you to save after every stage on subsequent playthroughs. This is a huge help when hunting down each level's three Star Coins, which is the game's hardest and most long-term goal.

If you don't consider yourself to be a pretty good Mario player, you may be a teeny bit concerned. On the plus side, though, the game includes inspired new features to give you a hand when you get stuck—it will even offer to play a level for you if you die on it several times. You can pick up tips from watching Luigi race through a stage on autopilot and then replay the level





How tough is this game? In level 8-1 [above] you must simultaneously leap across lava, avoid geysers, and dodge randomly falling rocks, all while running from a poisonous death cloud. *Yikes.*

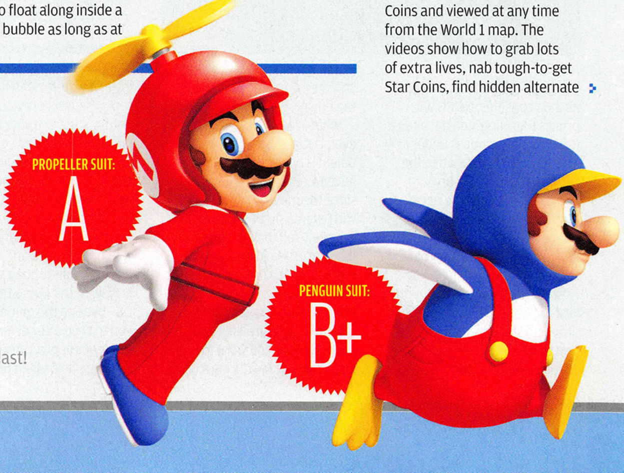


yourself, or choose to let old green-sleeves beat it for you. I was relieved to discover that this feature doesn't in any way detract from the challenge of the game—you simply ignore it if you don't want the assist—but it also doesn't seem to make the game all that much more accessible to Mario novices. Sure, it will get a player past a sticking point, but as most of the game demands a pretty high skill level, a poor player is likely to get stuck again pretty quickly. It's somewhat helpful to watch a demonstration of how the game should be played, so the feature isn't useless—but it doesn't make the game a good fit for casual gamers. Playing co-op alongside a Mario veteran (more on the commendably implemented multiplayer options later) is perhaps a better way for a rookie to learn the ropes, as the better player can lift and carry the other past tricky spots. Additionally, at any time a player can press the A Button to float along inside a protective bubble as long as at least one teammate continues to play through the stage (although it will mean game over if the active player dies). As when playing solo, however, most levels are filled with tough challenges, meaning that the only real way for less-skilled players to enjoy the game is to simply put in the time to polish their skills.

The game helps out in another way by including a long list of hint movies that can be purchased with collected Star Coins and viewed at any time from the World 1 map. The videos show how to grab lots of extra lives, nab tough-to-get Star Coins, find hidden alternate

Dressed for Success

The two goofy new getups in New Super Mario Bros. Wii are among the series's most useful costumes. Shaking the Wii Remote shoots a character wearing a Propeller Suit high into the sky, which helps you reach hard-to-get coins and safely pass through bottomless stages. The Penguin Suit isn't useful as often, but it makes swimming a breeze and comes equipped with the Ice Flower's ability to freeze enemies. And belly-sliding—on the rare stretches where there's room—is a blast!



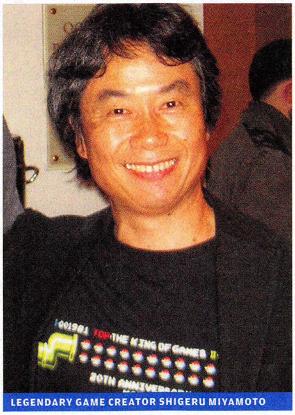
The Making of New Super Mario Bros. Wii

At a recent press event in New York, Shigeru Miyamoto (without whom Mario, Zelda, and probably Nintendo Power would not exist) gave reporters the inside story on the creation of his latest surefire hit. We were sure to write it all down. **—TOM H.**

ON MAKING A MULTIPLAYER MARIO "Because New Super Mario Bros. Wii is for the Wii console—which, for the most part, resides in the living room, and that everyone in the house interacts with—we needed to design the game in a way that would be appropriate for everyone in the house.... And interestingly enough, the concept behind the original Mario Bros. [the 1983 arcade game that later came to the NES] was that the games would always be played with two people."

ON PUMPING UP THE CHALLENGE LEVEL "Due to the broad audience that was drawn in by the Nintendo DS, one of the things that we tried to achieve with New Super Mario Bros. on DS was a balanced difficulty level that would make the game easy enough for newer players, yet still satisfy the needs of longtime Mario fans. But in making the game, we found that doing this was actually pretty difficult. In fact, I remember that, at the press roundtable at E3 this year, somebody raised their hand and asked, 'Will New Super Mario Bros. Wii be as easy as New Super Mario Bros. was on the DS?' I think I said that it wouldn't be as easy [Laughs], but what we've created this time is, in fact, pretty difficult."

ON BRINGING BACK CLASSIC ELEMENTS "There are a lot of fans out there that have favorite elements from different games, and we wanted to try to make them happy by bringing back some of the favorites from the past.... The Coin Battle mode is definitely an homage to the original two-player Mario Bros. game, and there are a lot of [other] elements that we have brought together from the past games.... One of the five Coin Battle stages is a kind of parody/alternate-reality [version] of the original Mario 1-1 world. If...you think you know what that world should look like,...you'll be very surprised. And then...the final boss at the end of World 8, I think, is something that will feel fresh and new but at the same time will feel very much like a parody of a past game."



LEGENDARY GAME CREATOR SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

ON THE NEW SUPER GUIDE "Some people will buy a strategy guide or go online [for hints], and what we've done here is to essentially include some of those features into the game itself.... Some types of [games] are suited to a system like the Super Guide... and there are some types that really aren't.... Trying to apply a system like this to [a game like] The Legend of Zelda opens up a Pandora's box of questions: do we show people how to solve puzzles? How much of a puzzle do we solve for them in order to help them understand [what to do]? Are there puzzles for which we would have to show the entire solution in order for some people to understand it? It can be a difficult system to apply to some games, but we do see some value in it, so we'll look at titles individually to see [if and how] it can be applied."

ON RETURNING THE SERIES TO 2-D "We wanted the game to appeal to, and be accessible to, as wide an audience as possible. And since we wanted to make it multiplayer, we really felt that the original Super Mario Bros. concept was best suited to what we wanted to do.

"I don't necessarily think that everything needs to be 3-D, or that just because we're seeing more 2-D games now, everything's going to shift back to 2-D. Instead, I think that what's going on is that people are realizing the benefits of a 3-D game, and at the same time, remembering what the benefits of a 2-D game were. With New Super Mario Bros. Wii in particular, multiplayer platforming is much better suited to a 2-D environment than a 3-D one. So I think that, going forward, developers will look at what the objectives are for their games and make the decision based on the benefits of each style.

"But in order to make the decision to go 2-D, you need the courage to not be so attached to the visual appearance of the game and to really pursue the gameplay experience. Because if you are concerned with how the game will be viewed based on its visuals, then obviously everybody's going to [go with] 3-D [to create] a more graphically impressive project."

ON WHY YOU CAN'T PLAY AS PEACH "I originally thought it would be nice to have Princess Peach as a playable character, but the Toad characters have a physique that is a bit closer to that of Mario and Luigi. And if we were to have one character out of the four wear a dress, we would need special programming for how the skirt is handled within the gameplay, and that's really the only reason why Princess Peach isn't playable. And, of course, if we had Wario in there, we'd have to program it so he could fart. [Laughs]"

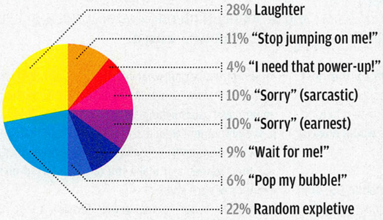
ON WHAT MAKES A MARIO GAME "What's really important about a Mario game is that it is simple to control and easy to understand; that the physics in the game are understandable...you understand what you're supposed to do, you understand the environment, and then you begin to unleash your own gameplay creativity. You try different things. The response that you get from the environment to what you've attempted to do feels natural, and ultimately the game becomes a kind of back-and-forth between the developers trying to [anticipate] what kind of things a player might try to do, and the player in terms of the response that you're expecting to get from the game. So to me, a Mario game is really about unleashing the player's creativity within the world that we've created.

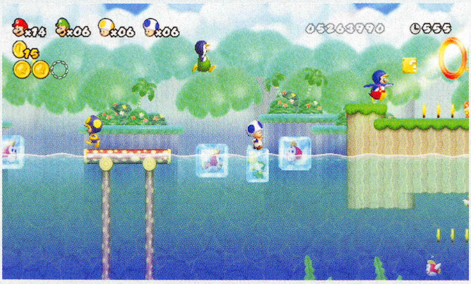
"[For example], in New Super Mario Bros. Wii, both the Ice Flower and the Penguin Suit allow you to shoot ice balls. So, in developing the game, it's easy to say, 'OK, we want the ice balls to freeze enemies.' But as soon as you make that decision, a number of different questions come up: If you freeze the enemy, what happens to it? If the enemy is in the air, does the ice hang in the air, or does it fall? If it falls, what happens when it hits the ground? Does it rest on the ground? How long does an enemy take to fall out of the air after you've frozen it? When it's sitting in the air, can you jump on it? Should you be able to jump on it before it falls? When it falls from a certain height, should it just land or should it break? When you're in the water and you freeze an enemy...shouldn't it float up? And if so, how high does it float? If it floats all the way to the top, can Mario stand on it? If he can stand on it, can he slip? What happens when he jumps off the ice?

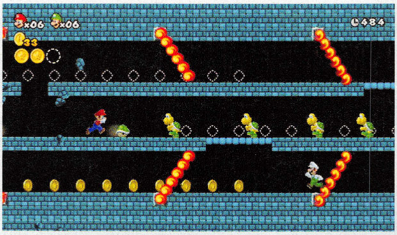
"It opens up a lot of different questions, and to me what's important about a Mario game is that the expectation that a user has in response to the action they've done is something that we're able to answer; that we're able to create the world in a way that it feels real based on what the user would expect out of that type of world and that type of action."

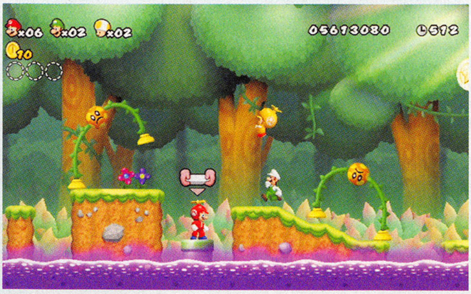
"Stop Jumping on Me!"

...and the seven other things most commonly said during multiplayer.









exits, and—best of all— Super Skills video clips illustrate the deep level at which the game can be played. These jaw-dropping displays of Mario mastery are truly a sight to see. Not only do they entertain, but they also showcase advanced strategies and techniques. (For example, shaking the Wii Remote while jumping results in an unassuming quick spin that, in the hands of a pro, can be used to slightly extend jumps to cover otherwise-impossible distances.) More movies become available for purchase as you progress through the game, providing a nice incentive to search for Star Coins and explore every nook and cranny of each world.

Along with the game's assist features, the other (and bigger) new addition is multiplayer—not the simple, shallow multiplayer modes that have appeared as ho-hum distractions in past Mario titles, but full-on "We're-all-playing-a-Mario-game-together" goodness. Coin Battle mode is a side game in which you compete to get the most coins on certain levels, some of which are exclusive to Coin Battle. It's really fun, and demands a good deal of strategy in addition to fast reflexes. The biggest and best multiplayer experience, however, is playing co-op through the main game. Up to three other players can drop in and out at any time while on a map screen, meaning that you can quickly and seamlessly switch between playing alone or with friends as they come and go. Strangely, playing with teammates makes the game both easier and harder. On the one hand, progress through a level isn't stopped unless all players run out of lives or die at the same time, which allows a team to push through hard stages. But then again, it's difficult to coordinate with other players; you end up bumping into one another and causing a lot of accidental deaths, especially in tight spaces or on stages that scroll automatically. But although playing with others can be a bit frustrating, it's plenty fun enough to outweigh the extra hassle.

As a lifelong Mario fanatic, I could talk endlessly about all of the game's little details, but all you really need to know is that the classic Mario formula is back and is as fun as ever. It's a testament to the greatness of New Super Mario Bros. Wii that, while writing this review, I've had to go back and re-evaluate just how good Super Mario Bros. 3 and Super Mario World were. I'm not ready to say that NSMB Wii tops two of the greatest games of all time, but it definitely belongs in the same company. Hopefully we won't have to wait *another* 18 years for a 2-D console Mario game as outstanding as this one.

—CHRIS SL.

LET'S HEAR FROM PLAYERS 2, 3, AND 4

NSMB for DS was a great game, but it was a bit too simplistic. The Wii game feels much more robust, and with the new suits, varied boss battles, and inclusion of Yoshi, a more appropriate title might have been New Super Mario World. Oh, and Justin? I'll never forgive you for world 4-3. **—STEVE T.**

While I certainly appreciate the option of playing with up to three friends, I think playing two-player co-op is just right. You can still help each other along without things getting too crazy. Just don't play with Chris Hoffman—he never waits for you to catch up. **—JUSTIN C.**

NSMB Wii is a fantastic platformer with amazing level design, but I can think of a few ways to improve it. Classic Controller support would have been great, and Yoshi is severely underutilized. PS: Don't play multiplayer with Chris Slate. He steals all the Propeller Suits. **—CHRIS H.**

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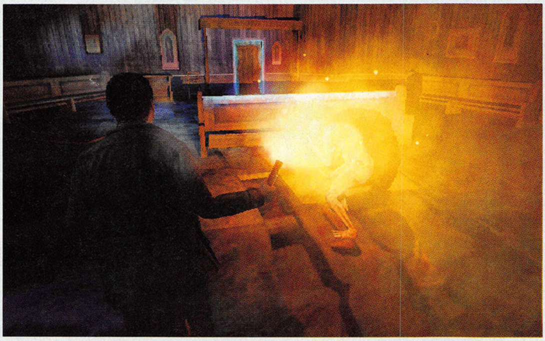
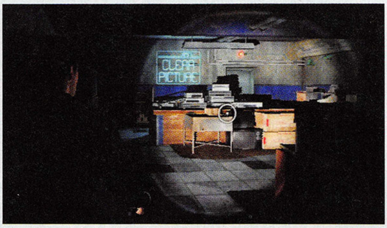




Fractured Fright

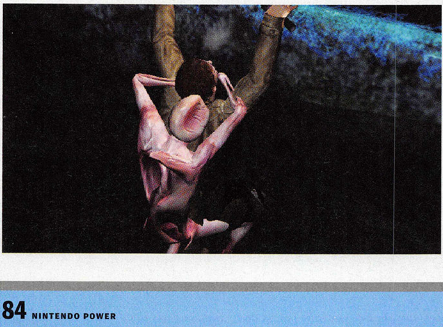
SILENT HILL: SHATTERED MEMORIES

RATING: **8.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **CLIMAX**
ESRB: **MATURE**

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories is a bold, ambitious attempt to reinvent survival-horror. It's a game of big ideas, intended to break the shackles of genre tradition and create a more convincing nightmare. That it falls just short of those lofty goals is a disappointment only because we have to settle for something merely good when the potential for greatness is so explicit.

Still, this return trip to gaming's creepiest zip code is worth taking. Few, if any, Wii titles provide a more immersive experience. For starters, wielding the Wii Remote as a flashlight works brilliantly (no pun intended), and the lighting effects that accompany it are truly impressive. So, too, are your surroundings, which boast an amazing level of detail—each locale feels unique and realistically adorned (if a bit dilapidated, of course). The game also uses the remote as a phone to great effect, with calls and voice mails playing through the controller's built-in speaker. I was so strangely compelled by this particular feature that I couldn't help but call every number I found printed on a sign or billboard (all of which actually work). A GPS and other relevant applications are accessible from your phone, as well, eliminating the need for any sort of onscreen display. Plus, the ways you interact with the world are very organic, making intelligent use of the Wii Remote without going overboard. It's all in the name of creating that suspension of disbelief—making you feel like you're really in Silent Hill.



To pull you in even further, Shattered Memories employs a psychological profile, kicking off with a therapy session in which you, the player, must fill out a personality survey. Your answers will affect the game in a number of ways, from the appearance of certain characters to how the story unfolds. Additional sessions are sprinkled throughout, acting sort of like thematic chapter breaks and building on your profile. The Silent Hill series has always had a strong psychological component, but this novel approach makes it more personal. The game really does get in your head, and you're constantly wondering what you've done to make things a certain way. (Fair warning, though: the therapist asks you some pretty personal and potentially embarrassing questions, so you may not want to play with friends in the room.)

Yet for all the great work it does drawing you in, the game is never able to leverage that into something truly scary. It's uncomfortable and unsettling, to be sure, but it doesn't leave your nerves completely frayed like the first three games in the series did so effortlessly. The main source of terror is supposed to be the chase scenes, which are triggered when you reach certain points in the adventure that have you running away from monsters. It's a great idea in theory, and I certainly don't miss the awkward combat from previous installments, nor the mood-breaking tedium of scouring the town for weapons and ammo. But the fact that you're in danger only during these scenes removes a lot of the tension from the rest of the game. They're not very dynamic either; aside from knocking over the occasional bookshelf and picking up flares to keep the monsters at bay, you're usually just running from point A to point B. A few more items or environmental interactions would have gone a long way.

The reduced emphasis on horror puts greater importance on the game's puzzles. Fortunately, they're some of the best in the series—creative and varied, yet never obtuse. Plus, the clues are always cleverly integrated with your surroundings and do a nice job of encouraging exploration. The narrative is quite engrossing as well, and concludes with an inspired twist that you'll never see coming.

So though it may not be the unqualified success we were hoping for, Shattered Memories proves an audacious and ultimately compelling experiment. We only wish it put our extra pairs of trousers to better use.
—STEVE T.

WRITERS' BLOCK

IN WHAT WAY DO YOUR PERSONAL OPINIONS DIFFER FROM LAST ISSUE'S ULTIMATE ZELDA FEATURE?

Justin Cheng

I'll admit that it's not a top-five-caliber game, but Majora's Mask should have made it into the top 10.

Chris Hoffman

I'd pick the Princess Zeldas of Ocarina of Time or Twilight Princess as Best Zelda over Tetra any day. I prefer my princesses regal rather than spunky.

Casey Loe

Majora's Mask at #11? No way. Majora's Mask was a work of game-design genius, and while it isn't the best game in the series, it's easily the most imaginative.

Chris Shepperd

It's surprising that Link's Awakening still doesn't get the credit it deserves. I'd put it ahead of the first Zelda *and* Twilight Princess.

Chris Slate

I appreciate the historical significance of Ocarina of Time—which earned our top spot—but in my opinion Twilight Princess is as good as any other Zelda.

David F. Smith

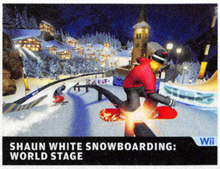
It's hard to set up Four Swords Adventures as it was meant to be played, but it was miles better than 12th place—a brilliant multiplayer game.

Phil Theobald

I will always believe that A Link to the Past is better than Ocarina. Its 2-D graphics age more gracefully, and there's no annoying Water Temple.

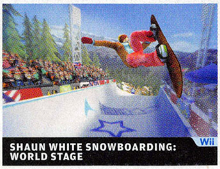
Steve Thomason

For "Best Hook," I would have gone with Ocarina of Time. Switching between time periods gave the adventure an epic feel beyond any Zelda before it.



SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING: WORLD STAGE

Wii



SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING: WORLD STAGE

Wii

SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING: WORLD STAGE

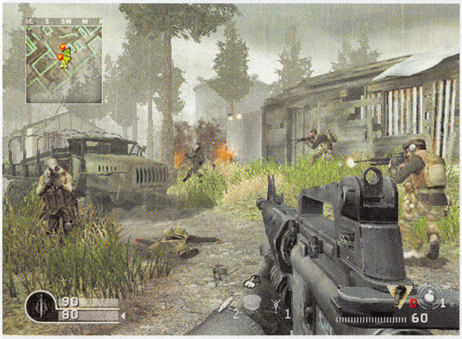
RATING: **7.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTREAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The original Shaun White Snowboarding stood out on Wii by taking a different approach to style, content, and (obviously) controls compared to other platforms. Steering with the Wii Balance Board accessory offered a refreshing, immersive way to play, and will again be a huge draw for World Stage. Unfortunately, not much has changed in this iteration, despite Wii MotionPlus support and a career mode in which you slowly climb the ranks to become number one.

The controls, be it with Wii Balance Board or the remote, are essentially the same. It's still difficult to maintain the crucial forward lean on the balance board to tuck your character for maximum speed, and there are still the annoying unintentional trick motions in midair despite the addition of Wii MotionPlus.

Climbing the ladder toward the top ranking adds a nice compulsive element to the single-player game, and there are certainly a lot of different events and courses. Still, the sparseness of terrain features combined with the rudimentary trick system tends to make everything bleed together into a soup of similarity. Multiplayer with friends is still a blast, but World Stage is definitely carving through familiar, if fluffed-up, territory. **—MATT K.**



Reporting for Duty

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE: REFLEX

RATING **9.0**

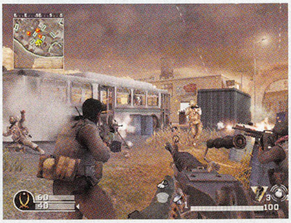
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **TREYARCH**
ESRB: **MATURE**

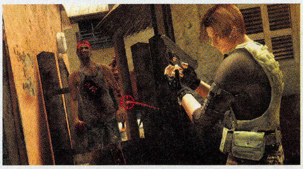
It's been two years since Call of Duty: Modern Warfare dropped onto the PS3 and Xbox 360, making the Wii entry very late to the game. But Treyarch, the developer of the solid Call of Duty: World at War, has made it worth the wait.

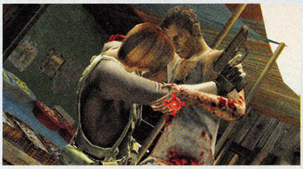
Both the single-player campaign and online multiplayer are surprisingly robust, and the Squadmate mode, which allows a friend to join in on the same screen in rudimentary co-op, à la Super Mario Galaxy, is brought over from World at War. Treyarch has included a new option for custom button and motion-control assignments—in case you don't like the default controls—which include both Wii Remote controller and Wii Zapper accessory presets. For example, setting the remote to toss a frag grenade when you shake it is extremely useful.

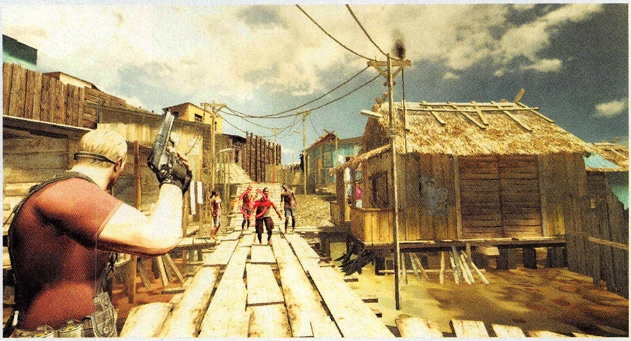
The delay in the Wii game's release is (mostly) forgivable when you realize just how good this game is, especially when dropping into the multiplayer, which is the real reason you'll want to make the purchase. It supports up to five-on-five matches over Wi-Fi and includes all 16 original maps and game modes, as well as the bonus system that gives you new weapons, attachments, and Perk power-ups.

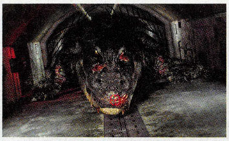
The game isn't quite perfect: the frame rate chugs a bit when a lot is happening onscreen. This is particularly notable in the endgame single-player missions full of swarming enemies, but you'll probably be too occupied looking for your next victim to notice. **—KEVIN K.**

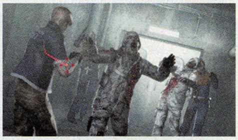












Diary of the Dead

RESIDENT EVIL: THE DARKSIDE CHRONICLES

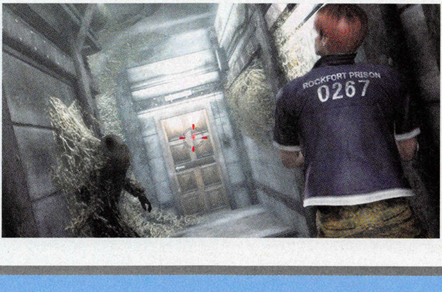
RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAVIA**
ESRB: **MATURE**

After being spoiled by the greatness of Resident Evil 4 on the GameCube, few Wii users were excited to hear that the series would be coming to Nintendo's newest platform in the form of a rail-shooter spin-off. But the mix of fan service and solidly crafted action in Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles won over most of the detractors and made for a major commercial hit. Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles follows in its predecessor's footsteps: it's still not the Resident Evil game we were hoping for, but it's hard to imagine any Resident Evil fan failing to enjoy it.

The Darkside Chronicles improves upon its predecessor in almost every possible way. The environments are much more detailed, the guns sound and feel more satisfying, and the storytelling is far stronger. Rather than four unconnected scenarios, the story of The Darkside Chronicles is presented as a single continuous narrative, with this collection's original scenario acting as a framing device for flashbacks to the events of Resident Evil 2 and Resident Evil: Code Veronica. The remake chapters faithfully re-create the most memorable moments of the games from which they're derived, but the developers aren't afraid to spend additional time in fan-favorite areas or swap out boring boss encounters for newer, better ones. It certainly doesn't hurt that while The Umbrella Chronicles was dragged down by the series's weakest material (the dismal Resident Evil 0 and the forgettable Resident Evil 3), The Darkside Chronicles deals exclusively with the strongest games in the franchise. Resident Evil 2 is packed with iconic characters and set pieces, while Resident Evil: Code Veronica arguably featured the series's best storytelling. Even the original scenario in The Darkside Chronicles manages to evoke some nostalgia with its many connections to the seminal Resident Evil 4.

Rather than jumping from one action scene to the next, the gaps in the narrative have been beautifully patched with nearly 50 original prerendered cut-scenes. This is one of several upgrades that suggest The Darkside Chronicles had a far larger budget than its predecessor. Another is the game's impressive length; although it has only three main scenarios, they're twice as long as the scenarios in The Umbrella Chronicles, adding up to one of the most substantial rail shooters ever released. However, skilled players should still be able to get through it pretty quickly, as the default difficulty is a lot lower than it was in The Umbrella Chronicles—if you've mastered the original, you may want to select Hard on your first time out. Like the previous title, The Darkside Chronicles does offer a few compelling incentives to replay each level, including the well-hidden "archive" files, caches of gold coins (which can be used to purchase permanent gun upgrades), and several unlockable secrets.



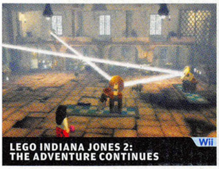
Outside of their overuse of the headache-inducing shaky-cam (which can make lining up shots frustratingly difficult), Capcom and cavia have done a fine job of converting Resident Evil classics into a traditional rail shooter. The only problem is that the Wii library is already packed with similar games, and "traditional" may not cut it anymore. The developers of Dead Space: Extraction managed to bring a great deal of the tactical depth of Dead Space into their own rail-shooter spin-off, and even mixed in a bit of puzzle-solving and some creative co-op mechanics. Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles, on the other hand, is just level after level of old-school point-and-shoot. That still makes for a compelling package when it comes wrapped in high production values and the mythology of a popular series, but The Darkside Chronicles would be a far stronger game if the developers had focused a little less on perfecting the rail shooter and a little more on shaking it up.

—CASEY L.

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES Wii

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES Wii

7th
1/3
LAP 00:50:00
BEST LAP 00:00:00
2197 STYLE
461 DRIFT
134 KM/



LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES Wii

TIP
BONUS WORD
10,070
NOOK
560

BOOKWORM DS DS

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

RATING: **6.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Flying refrigerators, giant killer ants, and supergoofy groundhogs make a lot more sense in the Indiana Jones universe when everything is made out of LEGOs. Well, as much sense as anything. Players have come to expect certain things from the licensed-character LEGO action games, and LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues delivers—silly slapstick humor that plays fast and loose with beloved characters and stories, loads of blocks to bash, plenty of things to build, and about a bazillion doodads to collect. Like its predecessors, the game offers an easy, pick-up-and-play experience that's ideal for co-op play with young kids or nongamer friends, but offers little depth in the gameplay department. Sloppy vehicle control and unrefined interactions with the environments are the biggest annoyances, and I found myself getting bored from the lack of challenge. Not only are the puzzles pretty simple, but you have infinite lives. However, there is an absolute ton to do in this game. There are adventures that loosely follow the plots of all four Indiana Jones movies, each loaded with unlockable characters, vehicles, power-ups, and secret levels. The game is structured very well; each game section has its own massive hub world that ties everything together, and exploring every nook and cranny to find all the goodies can be pretty addictive. And if that doesn't keep you occupied, the almost overwhelmingly complex level editor surely will. Too bad the actual gameplay isn't as compelling. **—CHRIS H.**

BOOKWORM DS

RATING: **8.5**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **POPCAP GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **POPCAP GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The geeky protagonist from PopCap's popular PC word-game series is packing a fierce hunger for his DS debut. Lex's voracious appetite for the written word is absolutely infectious in Bookworm DS. Forming words on a scrambled grid by stringing tiles together with the stylus feels natural, and the gameplay is well-suited to the handheld. While the word hunting itself has changed little from the original, a few extras make this version worth a closer look.

Themed word books to uncover and an 18-room library to deck out with accoutrements provide extra goals to strive for. For added spice, the intense action mode and new multiplayer battles kick the wordplay up a notch. This lighthearted, brainy puzzler manages to make word searches fun again. **—NATHAN M.**

Don't Go Too Crazy

NEED FOR SPEED NITRO

RATING: **7.0**

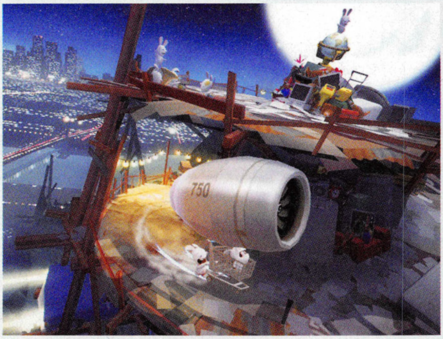
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA MONTREAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

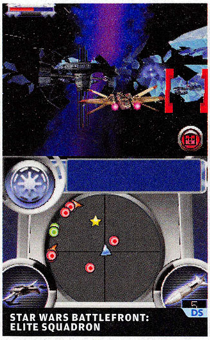
After last year's disappointing Need for Speed Undercover, Electronic Arts went back to the drawing board and developed a racing game tailored specifically for Wii: Need for Speed Nitro. And it works, for the most part—Nitro gives you arcadey racing akin to Mario Kart Wii (which seems to be one of Nitro's inspirations). Like Nintendo's premier racing game, Nitro has pick-up-and-play gameplay, power-ups, and up-to-four-person multiplayer. But one area in which EA's racer bests Mario Kart Wii is customization options (you can modify your car and graffiti tag, for example) and its great sense of speed, especially when you use a nitrous boost.

But perhaps it's because everything is so exaggerated that I wish Nitro didn't ride the line so much between being hyperbolic and being a typical racer. Take the power-ups, for instance: you can either acquire a wrench pick-up to fix your car (yes, there's car damage, but it mainly affects your nitrous meter) or a badge power-up that lets you sic the cops on one of your rivals. Sure, these add a new dynamic to the racing, but they're not terribly thrilling. If you're going to take the over-the-top route, why not go all the way? (This is particularly odd considering that the Nintendo DS version of Nitro allows you to drive on rollercoaster tracks.)

Still, racing around is enjoyable and can be challenging, even if the Career mode can feel repetitive due to the unfortunate lack of track variety. Thankfully, the repetition is offset by the fact that you can progress through the mode with your friends. **—JUSTIN C.**

2nd
3/3
LAP 00:07:47
BEST LAP 00:58:63
STYLE
DRIFT
NITRO
208 KM/H





STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT: ELITE SQUADRON

NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: CLASH OF NINJA REVOLUTION 3

NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: CLASH OF NINJA REVOLUTION 3

Home (Bitter) Sweet Home

RABBIDS GO HOME

RATING: **7.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

After headlining three minigame collections in as many years, the lovably maniacal Rabbids are finally lending their hijinks to something a bit more interesting. In Rabbids Go Home, our dim-witted protagonists have come to believe that the moon is their rightful abode and that the best way to get there is by building a tower of junk. You'll help them accomplish this task by driving around a shopping cart and snagging everything that isn't nailed down, be it office supplies, hapless bovines, or even people's clothes (which you can scare off them with a well-timed scream). It's a simple concept—reminiscent of Katamari Damacy—but the developers do a nice job of introducing new elements to mix things up. One high-speed stage lets you mount your cart on a jet engine, for example, while another involves floating from rooftop to rooftop using a hospital bubble bed, the confused patient still inside and babbling hilariously. The franchise's trademark sense of humor sets the tone for the entire adventure: frantic, bizarre, and largely entertaining.

Regrettably, the game takes an inexplicable turn for the frustrating about halfway through. The combination of narrow pathways, lots of bottomless pits, and a brutal checkpoint system can bring the fun to a halt pretty quickly (especially when you're trying to collect enough junk to unlock new costumes and other bonus content). It's not like the first half of the game is a breeze, but the ways in which it challenges you feel much more congruous with the core gameplay.

Difficulty issues aside, this is a definite step in the right direction for the Rabbids, and I hope to see them continue this way. Heaven knows we have enough minigame collections. —**STEVE T.**

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT: ELITE SQUADRON

RATING: **5.5**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

When developing for portable platforms, it's often necessary to simplify complicated games for the sake of casual audiences and harried commuters. But in bringing the Star Wars Battlefront franchise to the Nintendo DS, LucasArts has gone a little too far, removing most of the gameplay in the process. The changes make sense on paper: the short, fast-moving missions in the campaign mode allow players to make meaningful progress in even brief play sessions, and the simple controls allow the designers to mix in all sorts of game modes—TIE fighters, speeder bikes, turret sequences, and so on—without having to bore players with tutorials or send them searching for a manual. But while the gameplay is fast-paced and intuitive, it's also painfully shallow. With no power-ups to collect, varied tactics to pursue, or open areas to explore, the overhead shooting sequences are little more than a mindless blast-athon. The piloting sequences aren't much better; all the vehicles handle the same, and by locking players to a horizontal axis, the game fails to capture any real feeling of flight.

Like so many Star Wars games, Elite Squadron tries to make up for its tepid gameplay by piling on the nostalgia. The story of rival clones pursuing opposite sides of the Force is a predictable snoozer, but it is cool to get behind the wheels of familiar Star Wars spacecraft and visit the usual iconic worlds. The film-score-inspired soundtrack will also get the blood of any Star Wars fan flowing, even when the gameplay itself does not. —**CASEY L.**

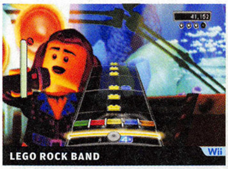
NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: CLASH OF NINJA REVOLUTION 3

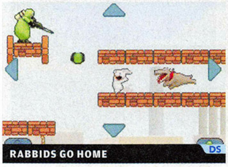
RATING: **7.5**

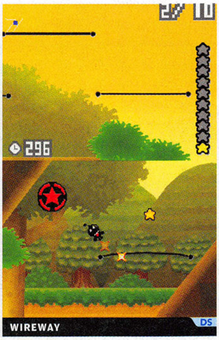
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **EIGHTING**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The latest Clash of Ninja Revolution title continues to refine the series's solid 3-D fighting, adding a host of new characters to the roster and fine-tuning the returning ones. Like its predecessors, Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3 is good fun—the fighting is fast-paced and has easy-to-learn controls—especially when playing against your friends. Still, playing solo is entertaining for a while, particularly in the Story mode, in which you progress through a CliffsNotes-style retelling of the very beginning of the Shippuden arc. But things can get frustrating due in part to some character-balancing issues with the new challengers. Akatsuki member Deidara is probably the worst offender, as he has a number of cheap attacks in his arsenal.

—**JUSTIN C.**


LEGO ROCK BAND


RABBIDS GO HOME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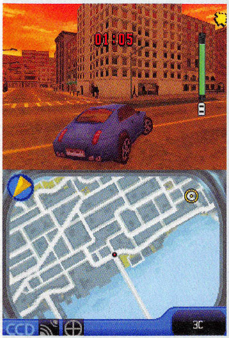
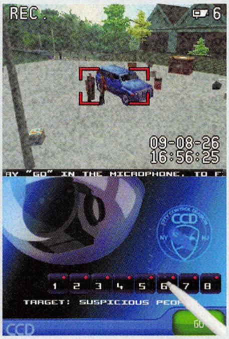




LEGO ROCK BAND

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES/HARMONIX**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

LEGO Rock Band can pretty much be summed up as Rock Band with LEGO aesthetics. The excellent Rock Band rhythm-based gameplay remains intact, and you also get some of the cutesy appeal that's a hallmark of the LEGO titles. The cut-scenes are particularly charming; it's pretty awesome to see your band de-ghost a haunted mansion by rocking out to the *Ghostbusters* theme song, for instance. Sadly, there's no actual building of objects, but there is some fairly basic character and home-base customization. This makes LEGO Rock Band feel more like a Rock Band game than a LEGO title, but there isn't much wrong with that—especially when the 45-song track list is solid. (Too bad you can't play online or download new songs, though.) **—JUSTIN C.**

RABBIDS GO HOME

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Rabbids Go Home is an old-fashioned physics puzzler, like Lemmings or The Incredible Machine. (There's a story that explains exactly why, but we'd waste half this page with the details.) In short, the goal is to build a Rube Goldberg-type contraption, transporting a Rabbid to the end of each level and picking up some widgets along the way.

Sound simple? Well, it is and it isn't. It's easy enough in the first few stages, but as the game goes on, some of the mousetraps you have to build would give old Rube a run for his money. It's the perfect style of puzzle for touch-screen controls, and there's an edit mode for designing your own custom challenges, which adds a lot of replay value to this latest exercise in Rabbid abuse. **—DAVID S.**

WIREWAY

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **NOW PRODUCTION**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

WireWay is a game that is built around its control scheme. Specifically, you use the touch screen to navigate a series of wires (and the occasional pinball bumper) as you fling an alien named Wiley around levels to collect stars. The mechanic works quite well and the careful aim required makes for a satisfying challenge. Unfortunately, the gap between the DS's two screens can be a hindrance, and the frustrating camera controls will often have you blindly shooting offscreen. Additionally, the gameplay becomes fairly repetitive after a few levels. A multiplayer option and modes that limit the number of shots or let you draw your own wires add a bit of variety, but they're ultimately more of the same. **—PHIL T.**

Arrested Development

C.O.P. THE RECRUIT

RATING: 4.0

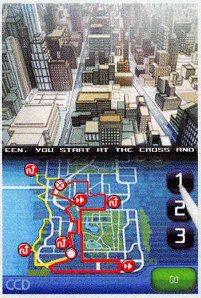
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **VD-DEV**
ESRB: **TEEN**

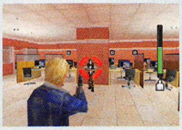
C.O.P. has a big idea and a lot of little problems. It dreams of being a full-bore Grand Theft Auto derivative for the DS, complete with a living city and totally three-dimensional gunfights. In reality, the technology just isn't quite there.

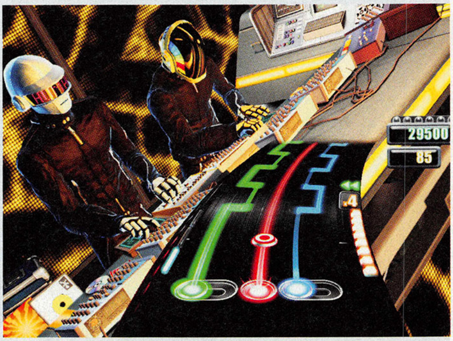
It's the little things. The vehicle physics are maddeningly inconsistent—sometimes go-kart loose and sometimes cinder-block stiff. It's hard to predict how a collision will turn out, which leads to some bizarre surprises, like when a cop car proves able to shove a garbage truck around the road. The third-person combat mode doesn't seem to work so badly at first, but using the Control Pad to move and the stylus to aim leaves the DS off balance, tilting to the left and often spoiling your aim. It's never enjoyable to spend as much time fighting the controls as fighting the bad guys.

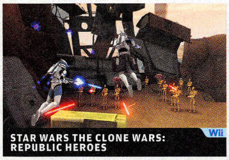
There's a story to hold the action together, but not very much of one. The dialogue has the same basic problems as Hudson's Miami Law: in theory, the game stars American characters and takes place in New York City, but in practice neither the setting nor the people in it ring true.

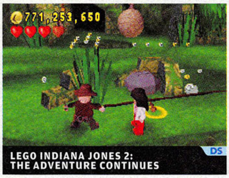
Visually, C.O.P. doesn't have all that many problems. As a 3-D rendition of New York, it's not half bad for a DS game, and the 2-D cut-scenes have a stylish Euro-comic feel to them. To get this kind of game right the next time, though, Ubisoft is going to have to do more than make it look good. **—DAVID S.**



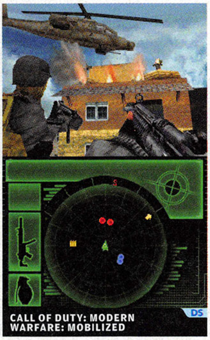





STAR WARS THE CLONE WARS: REPUBLIC HEROES Wii



LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES DS


CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE: MOBILIZED DS

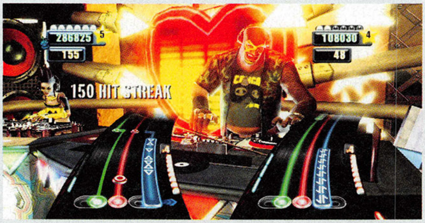
Mix It Up

DJ HERO

RATING: **8.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **FREESTYLEGAMES**
ESRB: **TEEN**

After playing roughly a bajillion rhythm games, I can't help but feel a tad burned out—after all, as good as these games are, hitting the appropriate button when the same-colored note appears onscreen gets a little old. Then along comes DJ Hero, a rhythm game that provides a refreshingly different experience—both in terms of its gameplay and its track list. Yes, you're still trying to match your button presses to the notes cascading down the note highway, but DJ Hero requires more dexterity than most games in the genre; you also have to scratch the turntable's platter and switch music tracks by sliding the crossfader left or right. (Unfortunately, the latter can be an issue at times, as the crossfader feels a bit looser than it should.) And if you want to get really fancy, you can twist the effects knob (which works kind of like the whammy bar and the effects switch on the Rock Band guitars), press the Euphoria button (think Star Power), and spin the platter counterclockwise to rewind a section. Admittedly, playing the game can be more than a little overwhelming at first—not unlike patting your head while rubbing your belly—but it's extremely gratifying when it clicks. To top things off, the song list isn't your typical rhythm-game fare; sure, you've most likely heard at least some of the songs before—Foo Fighters' "Monkey Wrench" and Beastie Boys' "Sabotage," for instance—but you probably haven't heard them mixed together into one song. **—JUSTIN C.**



STAR WARS THE CLONE WARS: REPUBLIC HEROES

SCORE: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **KROME STUDIOS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes, the latest faceplant for the once-storied franchise, obviously and shamefully relies more on name value than actual value. Anakin, Obi Wan, and Queen Amidala are all there, as are some new, utterly forgettable heroes. The story actually isn't all that bad, and it's conveyed mostly through decent cinematic sequences in between levels. But the stages have virtually no life to them: you bounce around through Star Wars-y settings, fighting the same half-dozen robots over and over again. Blasting the droids is kind of fun when you're playing as a Clone soldier, but attacking as a Jedi is disappointingly dull. Plus, as a Jedi you're made to suffer through platforming areas with a jumping mechanic that can be described charitably as inaccurate. **—CHRIS SH.**

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Following the story of *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, LEGO Indiana Jones 2 packs a huge cast of characters into its collecting-focused platforming. The coolest levels have an impressive sense of scale, such as a huge cliff face riddled with perilous terrain. Even when you get to the top, though, there's little sense of accomplishment because all the puzzles are spoon-fed to you and mostly involve placing characters on marked spots to perform the necessary task to proceed, like Indy using his whip to swing across a gap. Finicky touch-screen controls slow down the action occasionally, but mainly Indy 2 just lacks the charm of other LEGO titles due to a poorly adapted story and humor that falls flat most of the time. **—CAROLYN G.**

ALSO THIS MONTH

Don't be fooled by the name—Activision's **Band Hero** (for Wii and DS) is essentially a pop-focused installment in the megapopular Guitar Hero series.... Speaking of Activision, the latest Wii Call of Duty performed well this issue, and **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Mobilized** for DS is looking good, too.... Ubisoft's **Assassin's Creed II: Discovery** (DS) just missed our review deadline. The platforming is solid, but the combat seems questionable.... Designed specifically for fashionistas, Nintendo's **Style Savvy** for DS lets you select from thousands of articles of clothing to satisfy customers.... Konami's **My Favorite Storybook** for Wii is aimed at families with kids. It allows users to record their own voiceovers.

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PS2 PlayStation®2

Wii™

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
Animal Crossing: City Folk	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
The Bigs 2	6.0	2K Sports	244	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Call of Duty: World at War	8.0	Activision	237	M
Castlevania Judgment	7.0	Konami	236	T
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cooking Mama World Kitchen	6.5	Majesco	236	E
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fishing Master: World Tour	7.5	Hudson	238	E
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Guitar Hero World Tour	8.5	Activision	236	T
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	5.5	Electronic Arts	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Little King's Story	9.0	XSEED	244	T
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
Monster Lab	6.5	Eidos	236	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars	8.0	Gamecock	236	E10+
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
NASCAR Kart Racing	6.0	EA Sports	238	E
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Undercover	6.5	Electronic Arts	236	T
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Overlord: Dark Legend	7.0	Codemasters	244	T
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
Quantum of Solace	5.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	5.5	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Rock Band 2	9.0	MTV Games	237	T
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	7.0	Tecmo	236	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: Road Trip	7.0	Ubisoft	236	E10+
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Skate It	6.0	Electronic Arts	237	E
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Sonic Unleashed	8.0	Sega	236	E10+
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	6.5	Activision	236	T
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	4.0	LucasArts	236	T
Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World	8.0	Namco Bandai	236	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	7.0	Ubisoft	238	M
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Tomb Raider Underworld	7.0	Eidos	236	T
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	4.0	XSEED	246	T
Virtua Tennis 2009	7.0	Sega	244	E
We Ski and Snowboard	6.5	Namco Bandai	239	E
Wii Sports Resort	8.5	Nintendo	245	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	8.0	THQ	236	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	5.0	Activision	243	T

MORE ON:

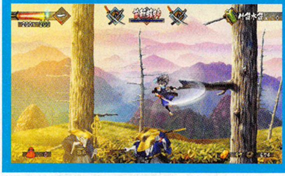
BASS PRO SHOPS: THE STRIKE

With solid controls (don't bother with the fishing-rod accessory, though) and a wide array of fish and fishing equipment, The Strike offers a lot to hardcore anglers. However, everyone else should skip this unpolished title. —JUSTIN C.

MORE ON:

MURAMASA: THE DEMON BLADE

I can't get over how amazing this game looks. Every single scene is a work of art come to life. It's ridiculously detailed, packed with layer upon layer of background elements, and it boasts some seriously cool weather effects to boot. Though the action isn't overly complex, I like it that way; you can pull off a lot of flashy attacks with just the Control Stick and one button. —CHRIS H.



Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Age of Empires: Mythologies	7.0	THQ	236	E10+
Ant Nation	2.0	Konami	245	E
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avalon Code	8.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+

Big Bang Mini	**8.5**	SouthPeak	237	E
Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	**5.0**	Graffiti	242	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	**4.0**	Sega	246	T
Blue Dragon Plus	**8.0**	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	**7.0**	Ignition	239	E
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity	**5.0**	Atari	238	E
Chrono Trigger	**9.0**	Square Enix	236	E10+
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	**6.0**	Majesco	248	E
C.O.R.E.	**5.5**	Graffiti	242	M
The Dark Spire	**5.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Dawn of Discovery	**8.5**	Ubisoft	244	E
Dokapon Journey	**4.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	**8.0**	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	**8.5**	Square Enix	239	E
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	**8.0**	THQ	248	E
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	**7.0**	Konami	237	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	**4.0**	Aspyr	248	T
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	**6.5**	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	**8.5**	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	**6.0**	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Fossil Fighters	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E
Gardening Mama	**8.0**	Majesco	240	E
Gauntlet	**7.5**	Eidos	236	T
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	**9.0**	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour: Decades	**7.0**	Activision	237	E10+
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits	**7.0**	Activision	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	**8.0**	Natsume	243	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	**7.0**	Natsume	248	E
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	**8.0**	Electronic Arts	240	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	**7.0**	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	**4.0**	505	246	E10+
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	**6.0**	Aksys	242	T
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	**9.0**	Square Enix	247	E10+
Knights in the Nightmare	**8.0**	Atlus	243	T
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II	**7.5**	Atlus	238	T
The Legendary Starfy	**7.0**	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Battles	**5.0**	Warner Bros.	243	E
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	238	E10+
Luminous Arc 2	**7.0**	Atlus	236	T
Lux-Pain	**4.0**	Ignition	240	T
Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	**7.5**	Konami	242	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	**9.5**	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	**8.0**	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/Black Ace	**6.0**	Capcom	244	E
Metal Slug 7	**7.5**	Ignition	236	T
Miami Law	**3.0**	Hudson	243	T
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	**8.5**	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	**6.0**	Eidos	247	E10+
Monster Lab	**8.0**	Eidos	236	E10+
Moon	**7.5**	Mastiff	236	T
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	**5.0**	Gamecock	236	E
My World, My Way	**7.0**	Atlus	239	E
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	**5.0**	Tomy	243	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	**7.0**	Tomy	247	T
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	**6.0**	Capcom	236	E
Nostalgia	**7.0**	Ignition	248	E10+
Overlord Minions	**7.0**	Codemasters	244	E10+
Peggle Dual Shot	**8.5**	PopCap	240	E
Phantasy Star Ø	**8.0**	Sega	248	E10+
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	**8.0**	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon Platinum Version	**9.0**	Nintendo	241	E
Pokémon Ranger: Shadows of Almia	**8.0**	Nintendo	236	E
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	**7.0**	Ubisoft	237	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E10+
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	**8.0**	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Quantum of Solace	**6.0**	Activision	237	T
Retro Game Challenge	**8.0**	XSEED	237	RP
Rhythm Heaven	**9.0**	Nintendo	241	E
Roogoo Attack	**4.0**	SouthPeak	243	E
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	**7.0**	Natsume	237	E
Scribblenauts	**9.0**	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner	**8.0**	Atlus	244	T
Skate It	**5.5**	Electronic Arts	237	E
Space Bust-A-Move	**7.0**	Taito	245	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	**8.0**	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	247	E
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	**6.0**	LucasArts	236	E
Steal Princess	**6.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Suikoden: Tierkreis	**7.0**	Konami	240	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	**7.0**	Atlus	241	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	**4.5**	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tokyo Beat Down	**6.0**	Atlus	240	T
Tony Hawk's Motion	**4.0**	Activision	237	E
Touch Mechanic	**5.0**	Aspyr	241	E
TrackMania DS	**7.0**	Atlus	240	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	**7.0**	Activision	245	E10+
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	**9.0**	Square Enix	240	T
A Witch's Tale	**4.0**	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	**6.5**	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	**4.0**	THQ	236	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	**7.0**	THQ	248	T
Zubo	**6.5**	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

MORE ON:

MARIO & LUIGI: BOWSER'S INSIDE STORY

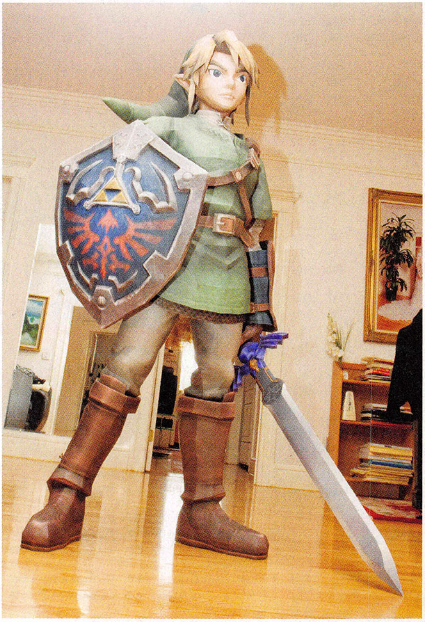
I usually don't have the patience to complete RPGs, but thanks to the fun, highly interactive approach to combat found in Bowser's Inside Story, I'm about to start my third playthrough. This is a definite contender for DS Game of the Year! —**CHRIS SL.**

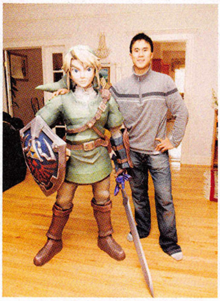
MORE ON:

PHANTASY STAR Ø

I agree wholeheartedly with Casey's review from last month. Phantasy Star Ø doesn't bring anything radically new to the table, but its reliable brand of co-op action-roleplaying is like video game comfort food. And now you can take it to go. —**STEVE T.**

Lv 2
HP 94/ 94
PP 68/ 68
Sarisa
Stage
Attribute:Native
Chat
Tactics
START Menu





FANDOM

Lifelike Link

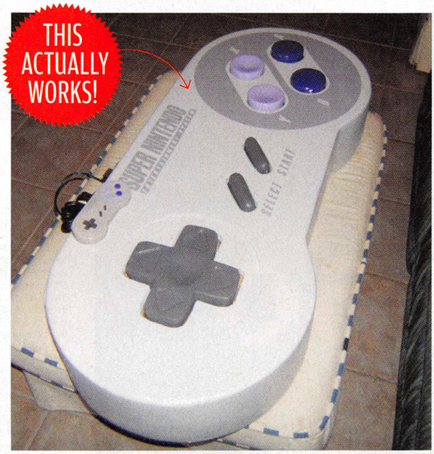
Hail papercraft master Haywan Chiu and his Hylian hero!

Better set an extra place at the table, because guess who's coming to dinner? We've seen some truly inspiring Nintendo-themed papercraft before, but this life-size Link made our jaws hit the floor. A few summers ago, www.papercraftmuseum.com founder Haywan Chiu, 24, was looking for an ambitious project to occupy his free time.

With the start of med school looming that fall, Chiu knew any spare moments he had would soon be consumed by the studious vacuum of higher learning. Finding inspiration in other gaming papercraft online, he became hooked. Chiu soon honed in on Link as his craft subject of choice. "Nintendo [made] my first console, so naturally I get a homesick feeling whenever I see those characters of my little days become tangible models," he explains. "I chose Link because I have always been a fan since I was a kid." Chiu spent the next several months patiently turning a stack of cardstock into an incredibly realistic statue of the Legend of Zelda protagonist.

Using a 3-D computer model of Link from Twilight Princess and software that allowed him to unfold the character into 2-D sheets, Chiu printed out the character piece by piece across 206 pages of cardstock. He estimates the marathon sessions of cutting, folding, and gluing that ensued totaled around 120 hours. Admittedly, cutting and folding page after page was a tedious and sometimes boring process, he says, but listening to the radio helped pass the time. "My parents were proud that I had the patience and skill to build this," he tells us. "My close friends were more amused by how real the sword and shield looked. Whenever they visited me, they would always pick up the sword and swing it a few times before they went."

But what does one actually do with a life-size cardstock Link once they've made it? "I will just leave it in my room to scare off any burglars," responds Chiu. "I mean, who would want to rob a house with a fully armed [Hylian] hero?" Eventually, Link may wind up in another permanent home, he says, if a video game museum or other suitable place to put him on display is found. **—NATHAN M.**



SUPER NINTENDO
SELECT START

MOD JOB

A Firm Grasp

Attack of the giant SNES controller!

Good luck trying to get a grip on this bad boy. Inspired by an Australian fellow who built a giant, working NES-controller coffee table, Super NES enthusiast and woodcrafter Matt LaBoone set out to create its upgraded counterpart. "I am a huge SNES fan," writes LaBoone in a blog post explaining the project. "It's what I was raised on, so even though the curves make it a difficult controller to shape, I decided to give it a try."

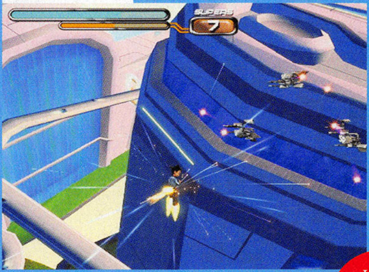
It took him the bulk of a summer and a lot of hard work to accomplish his mission, but the results are simply outstanding. Measuring a little more than three feet wide, this larger-than-life Super NES controller is fully wired to deliver intense retro gaming action. Though the Control Pad and buttons are designed to be a comfortable arm's length apart, it's hard to imagine playing Super Mario World without a friend lending a hand. —NATHAN M.

WRITE *your own* CAPTION

Screen Test

Luke, Professor Layton's assistant, took center stage in Volume 247's Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box screenshot. Apparently, talking to cows made readers think that Luke lost his mind when he's actually just very thorough. This issue we're taking a trip into the future. Those who want to join us should send a caption to **screentest@nintendopower.com.**

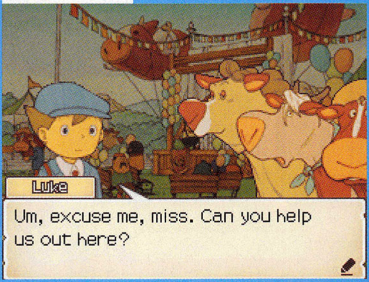
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



In order to be more green, Astro Boy is now powered by natural gas.

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 247'S SHOT



Luke

Um, excuse me, miss. Can you help us out here?

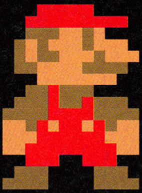
"Little did Luke know he was talking to the relatives of the hamburger he just had for lunch." —NATHAN P.

"The Professor discovers a more useful side of puzzles and dupes Luke into getting him some *really* fresh milk for his tea." —LAURIANNA W.

"Luke took drastic measures when the Professer claimed the crime was so simple 'a cow could do it.'" —ANDRES M.

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!



x 250

NEXT MONTH

JANUARY 2010 • VOL. 250

In just 30 short days we'll mark our 250th issue with a celebration of all things Nintendo, plus big year-end reviews and even a surprise or two. It's sure to be one for the history books, so don't miss the party!

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